FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

ImagineFX

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ART

Future

PHOTOSHOP

MAKE YOUR FABRIC MOVE

Inside

CREATE A FLOWING MONSTER DESIGN

USE REFERENCES FROM HISTORY

HOW TO BALANCE DETAIL IN A PAINTING

BECOME A

FANTASY ART LEGEND

Unleash your art's wild side! Learn the techniques that made Frazetta a master, with **John Stanko**

GET INSPIRED BY **JOE JUSKO!** READ HOW THE ARTIST PAINTS VAMPIRELLA

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Welcome...
to purrrfect fantasy art



The grand masters of fantasy art – the likes of Frank Frazetta, Ken Kelly and the Brothers Hildebrandt – ushered in a new era and respect for imaginative art. This month's issue celebrates their approaches, processes and legacy as we look at ways to adapt those classic approaches to fantasy art into your digital paintings.

We begin with John Stanko, this month's cover workshop artist, who applies Frazetta's composition ideas to his stunning portrait of a barbarian princess – and who can resist the chance to paint a tiger or two? On page 78 Olly Lawson uses the Old Masters techniques to tell a story, and Anna Steinbauer reveals how to make your fabrics move on page 94. Not to be outdone, Kelley Harris demonstrates on page 80 how to compose a flowing creature design in Painter, and Donglu Yu brings us up to date on painting fantasy forests using photo reference and custom brushes, over on page 86.

Elsewhere this issue, on page 20, we explore the legacy of fantasy art's pioneers and reveal how traditional art galleries are welcoming concept and digital painters into their spaces. With artists such as Erik Jones, Aleksi Briclot and Aly Fell all holding shows, has the established art community fallen in love with fantasy?

I'd also like to take this opportunity to reveal our new Digital Painting special issue, which features new portrait and landscape workshops from award-winning artists such as David Kassan and Jane Radstrom. Find out more details on page 52.

Ian

Ian Dean, Editor
ian.dean@futurenet.com

Our special cover for subscribers this issue.



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In progress

How John painted a roaringly good cover



John sent over a series of sketches painted with Frazetta in mind: a barbarian in the jaws of a dragon, a Conan-inspired character on her throne and finally a moody figure surrounded by nature and big, lovely tigers...



We loved the idea of tigers on the cover and the composition is a perfect fit. The figure goes through tweaks, from blonde to brown hair before settling on auburn, giving our female barbarian a strong, determined look.



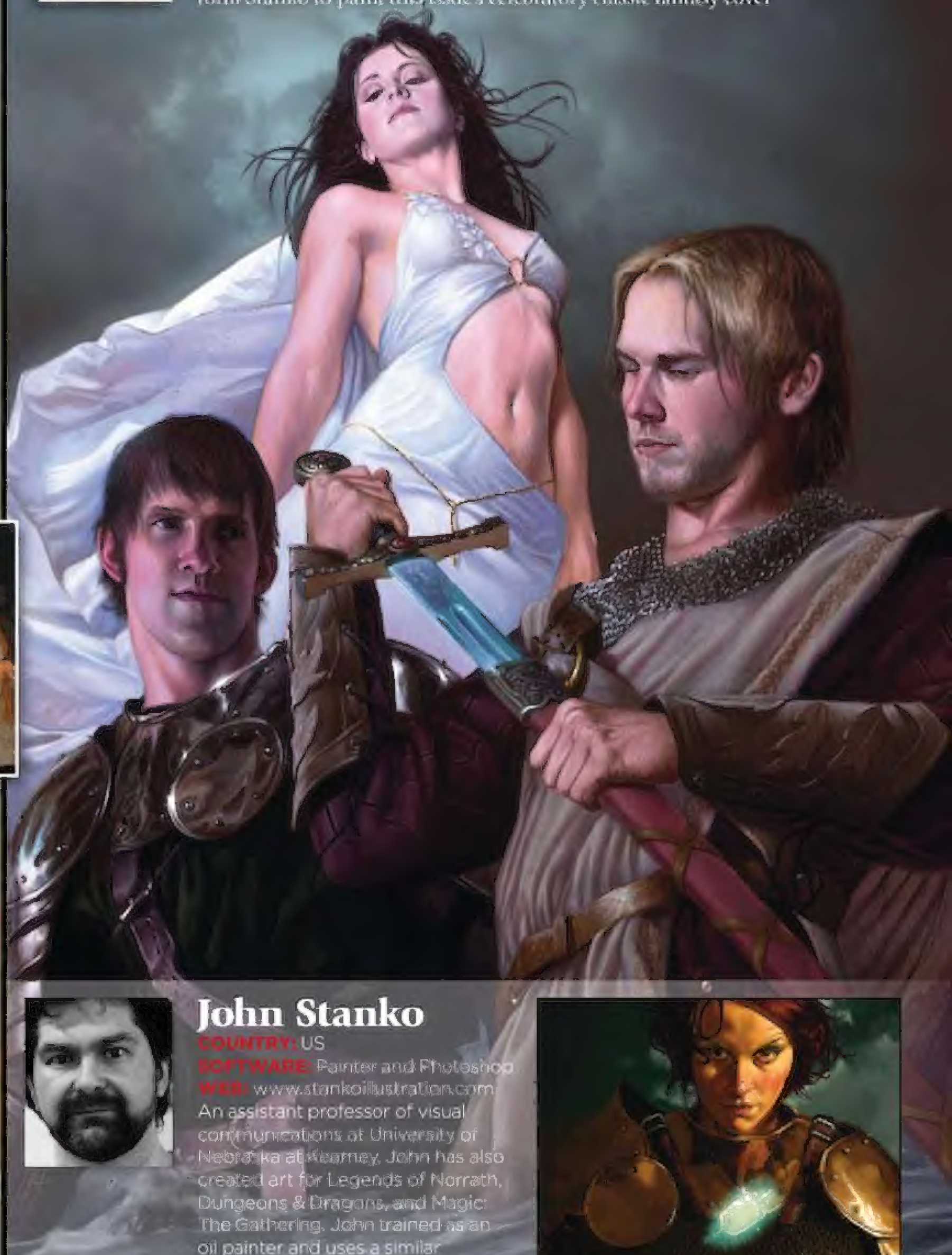
The final cover hits all the notes required of a classic fantasy portrait. A strong lead character is enforced by a hierarchy in both the image's composition and the overall cover design. Now turn to page 70 and read how John painted his cover in detail.



FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

ImagineFX Cover artist

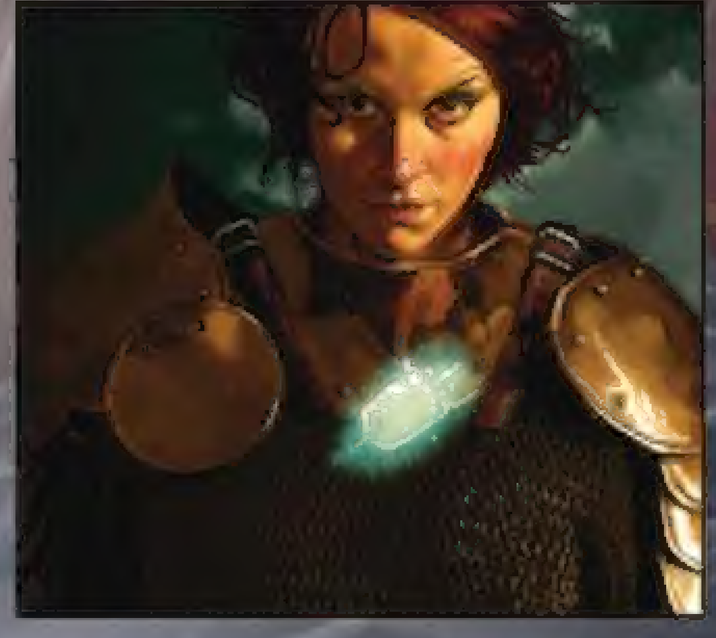
A traditional artist turned digital with a love of Frazetta, we looked to John Stanko to paint this issue's celebratory classic fantasy cover



John Stanko

COUNTRY: US
SOFTWARE: Painter and Photoshop
WEB: www.stankoillustration.com

An assistant professor of visual communications at University of Nebraska at Kearney, John has also created art for Legends of Norrath, Dungeons & Dragons, and Magic: The Gathering. John trained as an oil painter and uses a similar workflow in his digital art, making him the perfect choice to adapt Frazetta's theories for our cover.



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ImagineFX FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

Contents

FXPosé

8 Reader FXPosé
64 Traditional FXPosé

ImagineNation

20 News
30 Forum winners
32 Letters
36 Artist Q&A

Features

44 **Joe Jusko**
A childhood event caused Joe Jusko to feel torn between a career in the police force and art. So he tried both…

54 **Sketchbook**
The ballpoint pen is the tool of choice for Pawel Zawislak, whose personality comes through on his sketch pages.

58 **Steam into pro art**
Digital artists explain what it takes to be a concept artist, with tips ranging from camera-phone snaps to 'stealing' ideas.

62 **Development sheet**
Chris Anderson shows us his game environment concept.

112 **Studio profile**
Kingsisle Entertainment went into the video games industry without any experience of it…

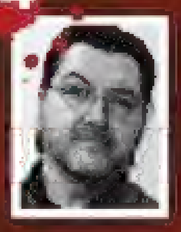
Reviews

102 Hardware
104 Software
106 Books
107 Training
108 Film
110 Video games

Regulars

3 Editor's letter
25 Digital editions
33 iPad editions
34 Subscribe today
53 Back issues
85 Next month
114 ImagineFX online

44



"I met Howard Chaykin in a comic shop. I had my portfolio with me and he hired me as his assistant"
Joe Jusko makes it sound easy

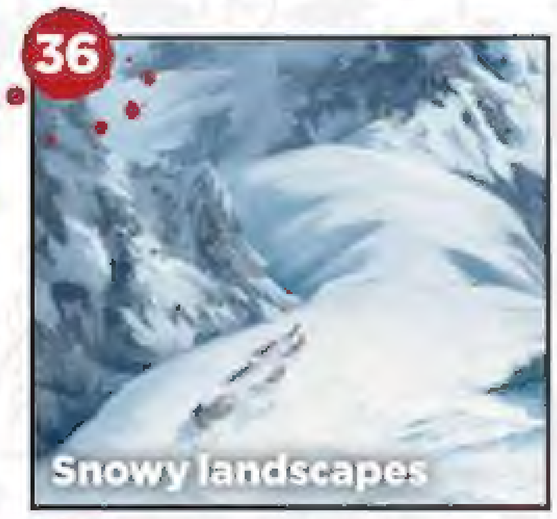


Reader FXPosé
THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



See page 8 for the best new art

36



Snowy landscapes

54



Sketchbook

62



Development sheet

39



A cool Cthulhu

20



Fantasy art in galleries

30



Forum winners

40



Alien ship concepts

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Issue 96 June 2013

ImagineFX
FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

Workshops

Advice and techniques from pro artists...



70 Adapt Frazetta's art techniques
John Stanko uses Frank's tricks to add dynamism.



74 Balance details in a composition
Liam Peters shows how he adds realism to fantasy.



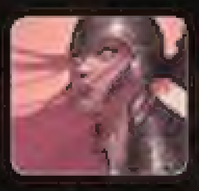
76 Give your art a traditional feel
Olly Lawson paints a traditional-style figure.



80 Flowing and chaotic compositions
Kelley Harris shows how to lead the viewer's eye.



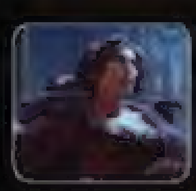
86 Bring a magical forest to life
Donglu Yu experiments with natural textures.



90 Take inspiration from history
Clint Cearley paints with influence from the past.



92 Getting to know Procreate
Paul Tysall on why less is more with this art app.



94 Learn to paint fabric in motion
Anna Steinbauer paints cloth on a moving figure.

Artist Q&A

36 How to paint alien spacecraft, objects in jelly, eyes, comics, caricature, nebula, speech bubbles, make use of Photoshop's Smudge tool and more.





Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

ImagineFX ARTIST OF THE MONTH

Aldo Katayangi
LOCATION: US
WEB: www.aldo-art.com
EMAIL: aldo@aldo-art.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop



Aldo can trace the inspiration for his career back to a tender age. "I got Akira on LaserDisc when I was five years old," he says. "It affected me greatly. I suppose it was an early lesson in finding beauty in unusual subjects." It must have been a rather terrifying experience for the knee-high Aldo.

Tempted by a career in medicine, Aldo stuck to his guns and pursued the life of an artist instead. "I went to art school instead of med school. I live with the consequences." He studied at the School of Visual Arts in New York, majoring in Illustration. Aldo also has a background in oil painting, which filters into the way he composes each piece.



1 THE STRUCTURE OF SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTIONS "With a contest deadline looming, I set out to make an accessible sci-fi image. Latex, explosions, guns, sexy amputation – I tried to cover the bases."

2 GUYVER TRANSFORMATION "This was mainly a texture-painting exercise. The armour grows around the character, so I thought of it being like oyster shell and cancer tissue. I envisaged the metallic components in the original character design as pearl-like constructs."



ARTIST OF THE MONTH

Congratulations Aldo – you've won yourself a copy of Exposé 10 and d'artiste: Character Design! To find out more about these two great books, go to www.ballisticpublishing.com.

FXPosé submissions to: fxpose@imaginefx.com

Artist crit

Creature artist Manon Delacroix admires Aldo's technical skills



"Aldo's piece is full of movement. The brush marks give the armour an organic feel and it almost looks animated the way the armour is disintegrating before our eyes."

Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

Wlad Salzer

LOCATION: Germany
WEB: www.salzeros-art.de
EMAIL: salzeros.art@gmail.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop



Originally born in Russia but now living in Germany, self-taught artist Wlad dedicated every spare moment to improving his artistic skills. "I don't have formal or specialist training – instead, everything I know about art has come from art books, the internet and lots of practice," he explains.

When Wlad was young, he spent much of his time painting and drawing, but made the switch to digital around five years ago. "Digital art started out as a hobby for me, but now I'm determined to become a professional artist. I've started to take on freelance work, and I really hope it continues to grow."





IMAGINEFX CRIT



"A chess queen ripped from her board and brought to life – what an excellent idea! Her armour design is really engaging and I love how Wlad has mirrored the sharp angles through into his character's environment, creating a unified scene."
Ian Dean, Editor

1 EXORCISM "This piece is based on the book Guard, written by Aleksey Pehov. I wanted to create something taking inspiration from the visual style of Blizzard."

2 BLACK CHESS QUEEN "A contest piece for the Russian art forum Demiart. The task was to draw a chess queen with her army, with her castle, background and armour matching her character. It integrates classic fantasy and steampunk elements."

FXPosé submissions to: fxpose@imaginefx.com



Phillip Zeyan Zhang

US
www.bit.ly/ifx-pzzhang
zzy0644@yahoo.com
Photoshop

A fascinating East-meets-West artist, Phillip was born in China but eventually moved across to LA after his family decided to move there. After discovering his talent for drawing as a child, Phillip brought his love for arts across the Pacific Ocean to his new home. "Like many other kids, I attended several after-school programmes," he says, "but I realised I was bad at sports, math and music. Soon enough, I finally found a passion for art."

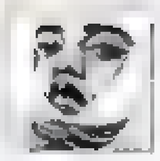
Phillip's busy studying game art at the Laguna College of Art and Design, with an eye on moving into the game or animation industries when he eventually graduates. Although his current studies emphasis 2D and 3D environment design, he's got quite a flair for original characters and monsters, too.

1 DRAGON LORD "In this piece, the Dragon Lord returns to the smoky old town where he was born and where his hidden memories are buried."

2 THE BIG TREE "This is based on an old tale: 'The night when you see a huge tree growing on top of a mountain, something unexpected will happen.'"

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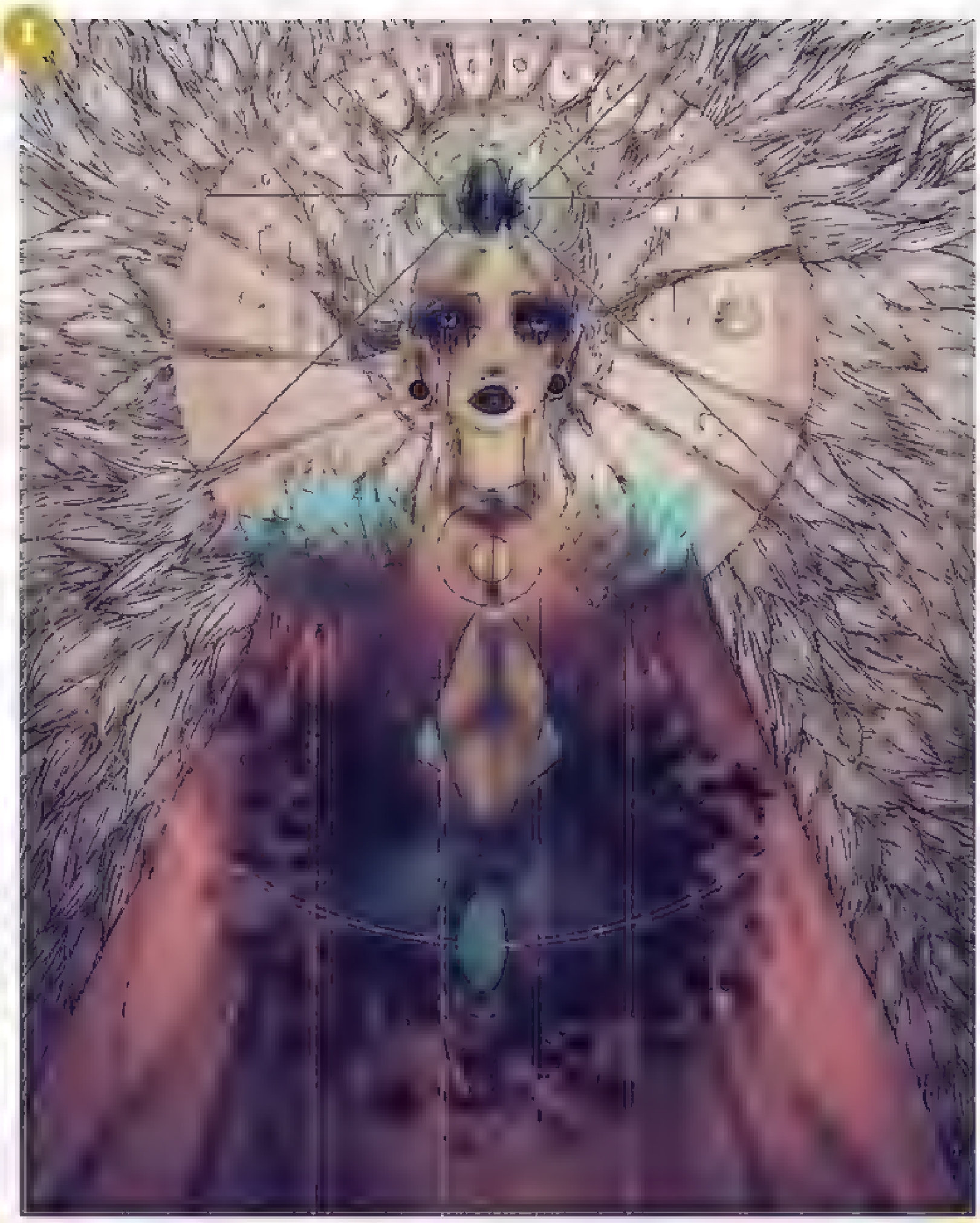
Olivia Rose
England
www.lalasdreambox.com
info@lalaillustrations.co.uk
Photoshop



A unifying theme of Olivia's work is her focus on female characters, but from this she extrapolates images in a variety of styles and tones. Her approach to mediums is similarly mixed: "I use a number of materials to create my illustrations," she says, "such as watercolours, Photoshop and markers."

Olivia loves working digitally and it was seeing other artists' work in Photoshop that inspired her to pursue a career in art. "When working digitally the possibilities seem endless," she says.

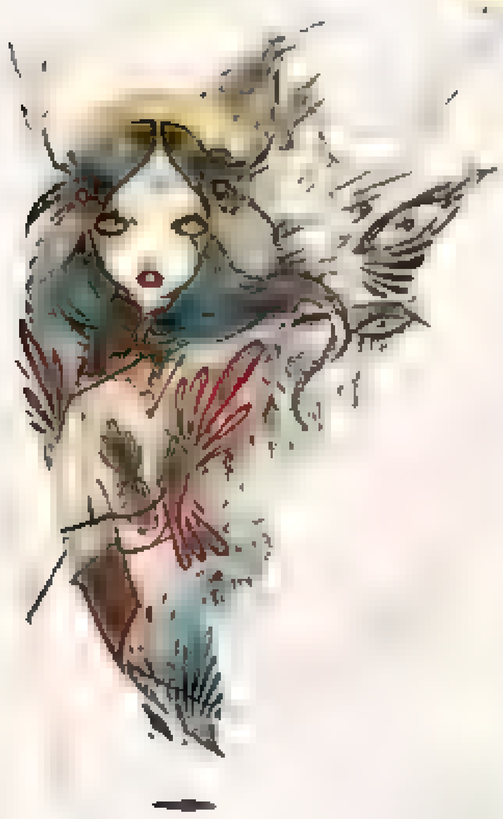
Her ambitions lay in concept art and character design for films, but her two favourite things remain firmly in the real world: "My mechanical pencil and a butterscotch milkshake. They're two things I can't survive without."



1 REMEDY "She's supposed to be a Mother Nature figure. Her long hair signifies roots that are merging with her surroundings. Instead of giving her an organic, green appearance I really wanted her to be more regal looking, like a queen."

2 SOUL REFLECTION "This was painted for a group exhibition. I was keen to create a surreal scene that focused on a single character and I really wanted stories to pop into people's minds; she's open to interpretation."

3 FORGIVE X FORGET "I wanted to create two characters that signify these two emotions in a scene that shows them coming together. It looks almost like a battle scene of two strong-headed women, neither willing to budge."

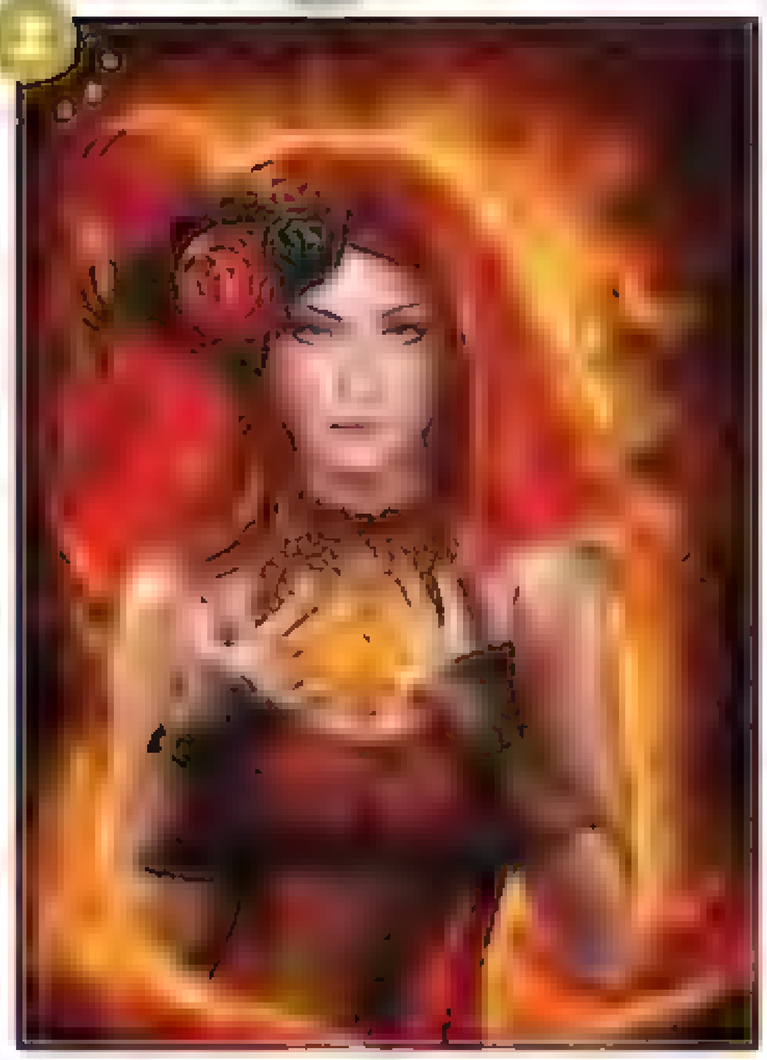




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Alena Lazareva

Russia
www.alenalazareva.com
alenka.lazareva@mail.ru
Photoshop



Russian artist Alena originally trained in traditional mediums at art school. It was only in 2007 that she first discovered digital painting and it's been her "favoured medium ever since". A Wacom Intuos3 tablet and Photoshop quickly becoming her tools of choice.

Her work combines fairy-tale pop princesses with darker, more fantastical themes such as fallen angels and animal companions. "I like to create faeries, angels, mermaids and mystical creatures with many light effects," she says. "Most of my work is full of vibrant colours."

"Alena's use of warm and cold colours grab the attention, but it's the subtle forms emerging out of the wall of Fallen Angel that first caught my eye... that, and the butt-naked angel in the foreground."

WINTER WARRIOR PRINCESS "She's in a wintry landscape, accompanied by a powerful wolf. I emphasised the clothes of the princess and added fine details such as her dagger and amulet."

MAGIC "This sorceress takes her energy from a fiery amulet. I wanted the image to be mystical. I really enjoyed painting this portrait and using many variations of red and yellow for my colour scheme. I paid attention to drawing the fine detail, especially with her eyes and face."

FALLEN ANGEL "She committed the mortal sin of falling in love with a human, which made the picture more interesting. I decided to represent 'a wall of sin' on a background – it's up to the viewer to figure out what it means."

Reader FXPosé

Vincent Coviello

FROM: US

www.bit.ly/ifx-vcovie lo

vinsight@comcast.net

USED: Photoshop



For many years, monsters, creatures and things that go bump in the night have fuelled Vincent's imagination and creativity. "They haunt and plague me," he says, "but then there's also my large and crazy family too!"

The nightmarish concoction of mad relatives and strange creatures is a winning one, and Vincent strives to create unique designs that make people think. "I want to create art that not only is interesting to look at, but also holds a sense of being biologically functional to the world that governs them."

Vincent hopes to establish himself in a pre-production role in games and film. "I want to create the characters and creatures we play, see and connect with, all from a unique perspective."



"Vincent's exquisite creature works remind me of the old speculative science illustrations of the Victorian era; they're elegantly detailed, graceful and grounded in reality, but wildly imaginative at the same time."



THE MELUSINE "By the pricking of my thumbs, something pretty this way comes... Every so often I entertain the idea of painting something mildly attractive. In some myths, the Melusine holds a key and whoever can take it from her can have her hand in marriage and a wish. How romantic."

THE SLAP-JAW "This is a concept for a semi-aquatic insectivore known as the Slap-Jaw. Prior to the dry season, the creature engorges itself on the swarms of mating kites."

DUNE "Dune is arguably the most influential science fiction book out there. On the left is one of the Bene Gesserit sisters, with a breathing device used to filter spice in its purest form, and to the right is a sand worm found throughout the spice planet Arrakis."

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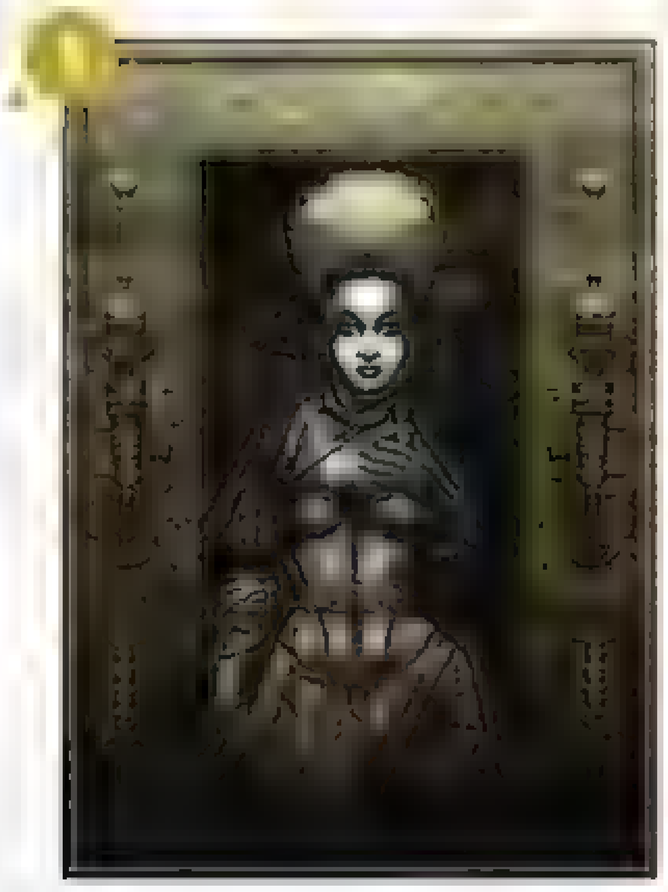
Keith Donald

LOCATION: England
WEB: www.kadonaldart.com
hevcoat1@sky.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop, 3ds Max



After teaching himself to paint with traditional mediums, a new career as an environmental artist in the video games industry saw Keith discover the delights of digital software. "I now use digital software in all my artwork and work from scanned detailed pencil sketches, finishing everything off in Photoshop," he says.

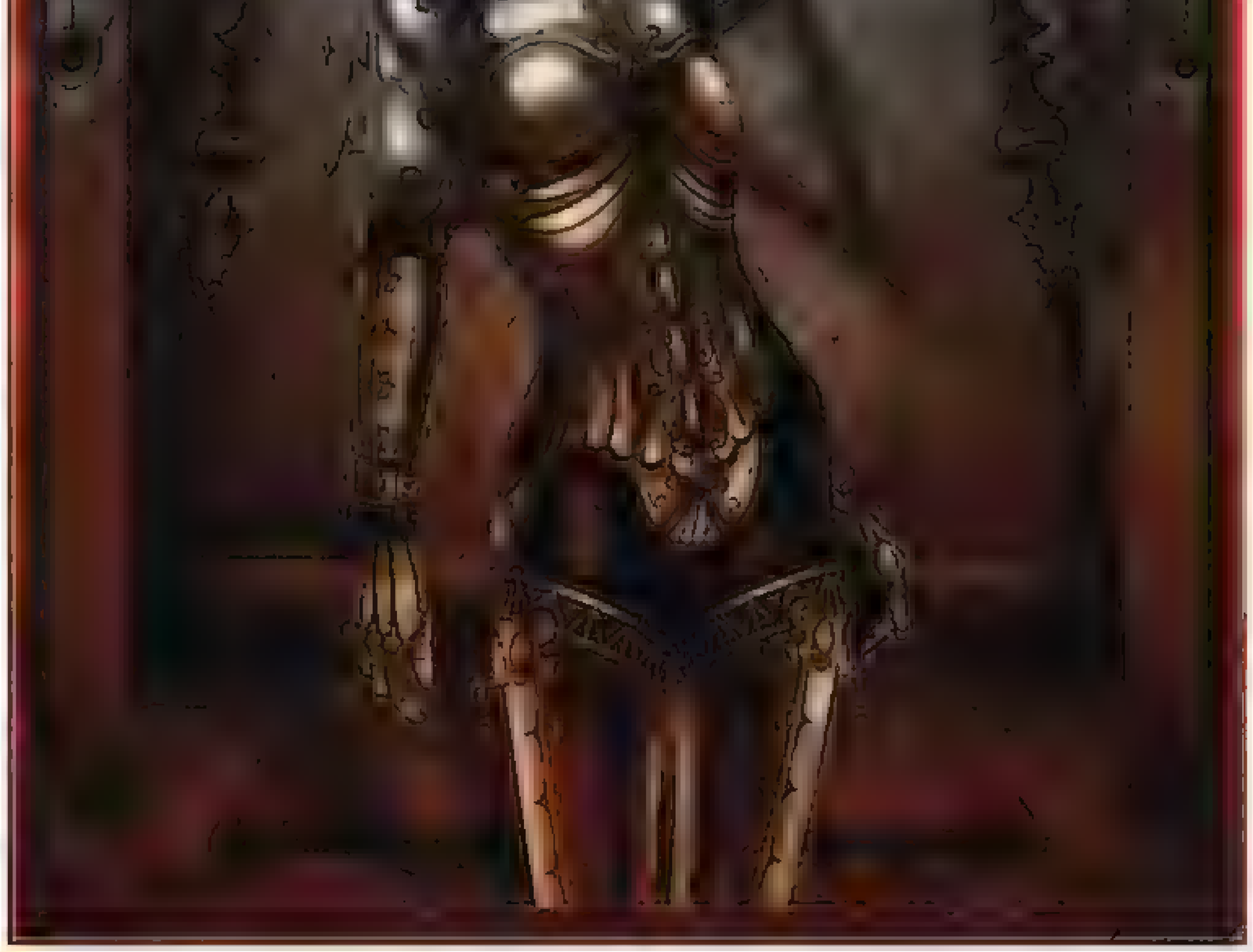
With a style leaning more to the darker side, it's no wonder that Keith's main inspirations are so eclectic. "I seem to be influenced by a strange mixture of early German expressionist films such as The Cabinet of Dr Caligari, along with the steampunk genre and fantasy illustrators such as Brom, Roger Dean and Chris Achilleos."



BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN "This was inspired by the old Universal film The Bride of Frankenstein. I utilised the classic look of the bride and added the usual steampunk elements. The Latin inscription on the wall translates as 'To a new world of gods and monsters' – a line that's quoted in the original film."

METROPOLIS ROBOT – STEAMPUNK "This was the first piece I produced taking influences from old sci-fi films and adding my own steampunk twist. It was influenced by the robot in Fritz Lang's Metropolis. I built most of it in 3ds Max, adding lighting and detail in Photoshop."

THE AVIATOR "The archetypal steampunk girl – this shows my great love for the genre. I was initially inspired after watching the film Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow, and proceeded to add as many steampunk clichés as I could think of."





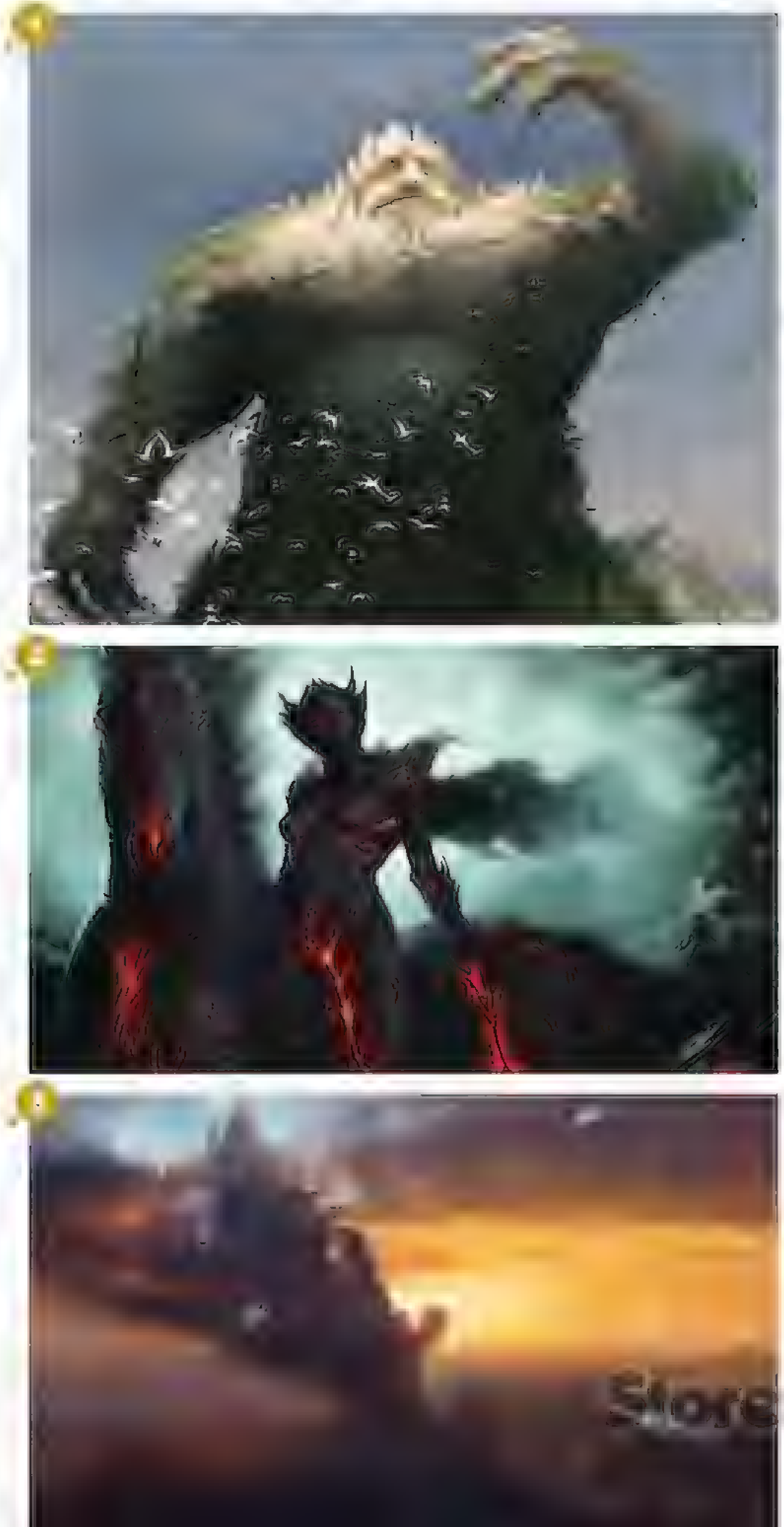
IMAGINEFX CRIT



"Keith's gone to extremes in his exploration of the steampunk genre. Yet whether he's putting a light touch of brass and copper to his Metropolis robot, or going all out with the look, as in his Aviator image, the results are eye-catching."

Cliff Hope
Operations Editor

FXPosé submissions to: fxpose@imagine-fx.com



Adam J Duff
LOCATION: Canada
WEB: www.adamationstation.com
EMAIL: adamduff@videotron.ca
SOFTWARE: Photoshop, Painter



Although Adam began his career and training in Classical Film Animation and the Fine Arts, his main passion is in concept art and illustration. "In that regard, I'm mostly self-taught," Adam explains "Being a child of the early video game revolution, my professional roots are set in the production of video games, having worked as a concept artist before eventually becoming an art director for such studios as Electronic Arts and A2M (Behaviour)."

IMAGINFX CRIT



"The sweeping arch of the birds tumbling from the Mountain God's fingers helps to create scale on a monstrous level. I also love the expression on his face. Whatever has disturbed him, he's clearly not very amused!"
Shan Shen
Designer

SHAN SHEN (MOUNTAIN GOD) "I'm always in search of new inspiration to ensure diversity in my work, I turned to Chinese lore and art for this piece. In Chinese literature, elements found in nature are deified and all have unique personalities and purposes."

CINDERELLA (OF THE ASHES) "This was inspired by a recurring dream. The piece is as it was envisioned a woman and stallion composed of molten lava, where the skin is the cooled black crust, and where the body moves, cracks form exposing the red-hot liquid core."

ASGARD "This was originally intended as a life study, but as the piece progressed it began to say 'home of the gods', as in the story of Thor. Particular focus was aimed at how local electrical energies could influence architecture, travel and survival."

Reader FXPosé

Justin Goby Fields

LOCATION: US
WEB: www.justinfields.com
justingobyfields@gmail.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop, ZBrush, Maya, SketchUp



Taking part in a short internship at Aaron Sims Company back in 2011 has really paid off for Justin, who has found himself working as a concept artist and illustrator ever since. "I've been lucky enough to get hired for full-time work on several major motion pictures and games," he says, "and I now work as a freelance concept artist."

After studying entertainment design at the Gnomon School of Visual Effects, in Hollywood, much of Justin's work draws on childhood memories of classic sci-fi. "My inspiration comes from a love of growing up watching Star Wars, Aliens and other classics, and wanting to be a part of that magic."



SECURITY CHIEF O'MALLEY "A fan piece for the new Star Trek series by JJ Abrams. I wanted this concept to stay humanoid but still suggest there could be other warrior archetypes besides what we've seen in the series so far."

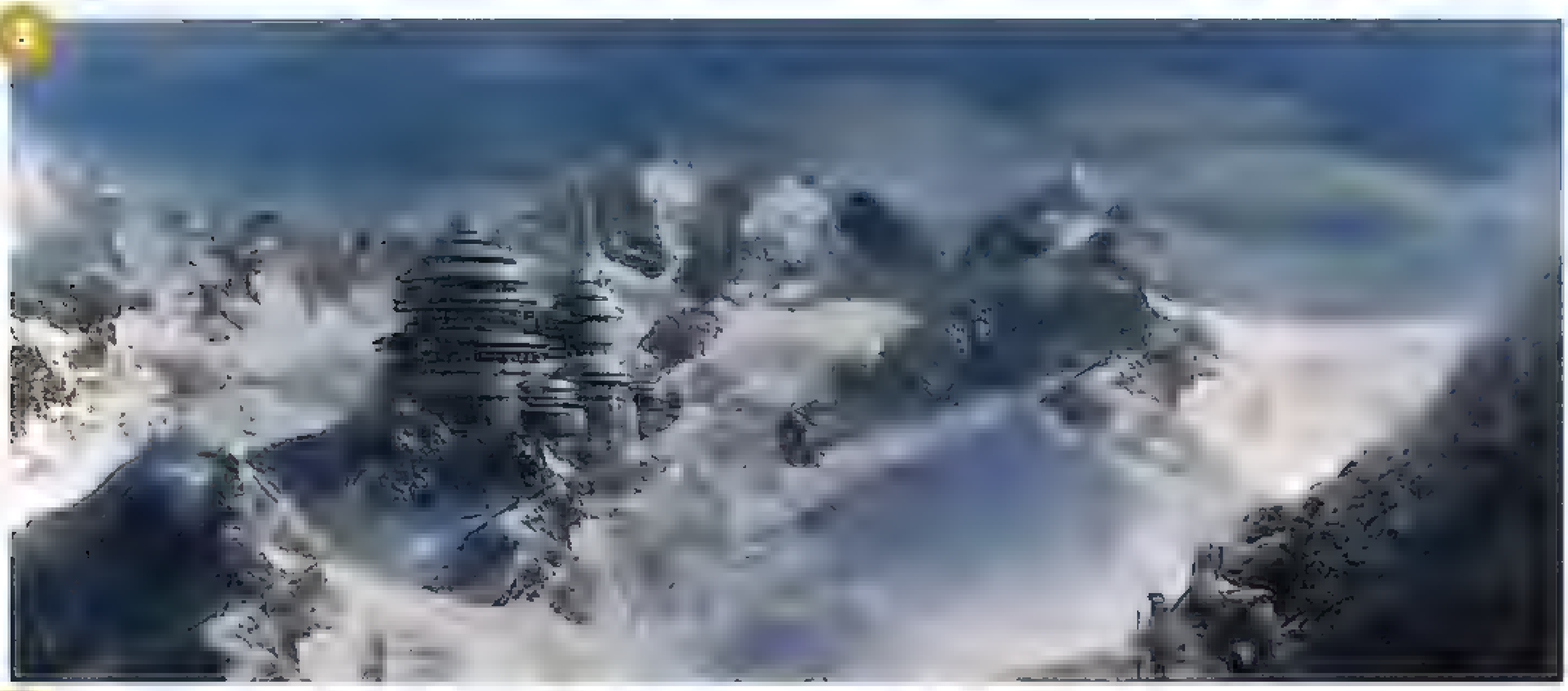
SPACEPORT "A portrait of a polluted planet and a major hub of space travel. This piece was a lot of fun to imagine. Perhaps some day, I'll get around to animating it."

HUTT PALACE ON HOTH "I wanted to practise some matte painting techniques. I enjoy learning new skills that speed up my workflow while practising the foundations."

ALIEN SMILE "This was for a story I've been working on in my free time. The sci-fi genre will always be my favourite. I wanted this piece to portray a sense of ominous intent."



sciencemags







"Serious-looking humanoids, expansive alien vistas… whatever the subject, Justin is able to translate his ideas for sci-fi into great pieces of art He's clearly able to bring the best out of his 2D and 3D creative toolset."

Want to see your digital art grace these very pages? Send your work to us, along with an explanation of your techniques, the title of each piece of art, a photo of yourself and your contact details. Images should be sent as 300dpi JPEG files, on CD or DVD. All artwork is submitted on the basis of a non-exclusive worldwide licence to publish, both in print and electronically.

You can also email submissions for FXPosé. Bear in mind that files must be no more than 5MB in total, or we won't receive them. fxpose@imaginefx.com

SEND YOUR ARTWORK TO:
FXPosé
ImagineFX
30 Monmouth Street
Bath, BA1 2BW
UK

ARTIST NEWS, SOFTWARE & EVENTS
ImagineNation
AT THE CORE OF THE FANTASY ART COMMUNITY



Mythological art has been accepted as fine art through the centuries in stages, but today we call it fantasy art



IT IS YOUR DESTINY

What do you get when you slam together medieval fantasy with epic sci-fi? The answer is Destiny, Bungie's future blockbuster that's what!

Page 23



HATS OFF FOR HATBOY!

Hatboy, our new comic strip, is the work of Vaughn Pinpin, a student in the Philippines with a nice line in subversive humour. Check him out!

Page 24



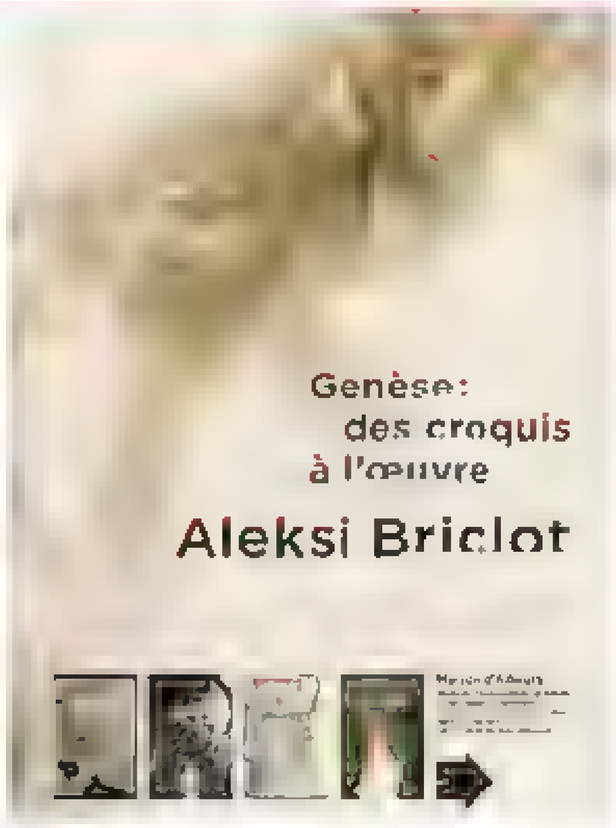
DOUBLE WHAMMY

There are not one but two artists sharing a studio in this month's Artist in Residence feature – find out why they've agreed to bare the internet.

Page 25

Look who's popular now

Buyer's market Could the increasing amount of fantasy art appearing in galleries be down to nostalgic collectors, or the evolution of classical art?

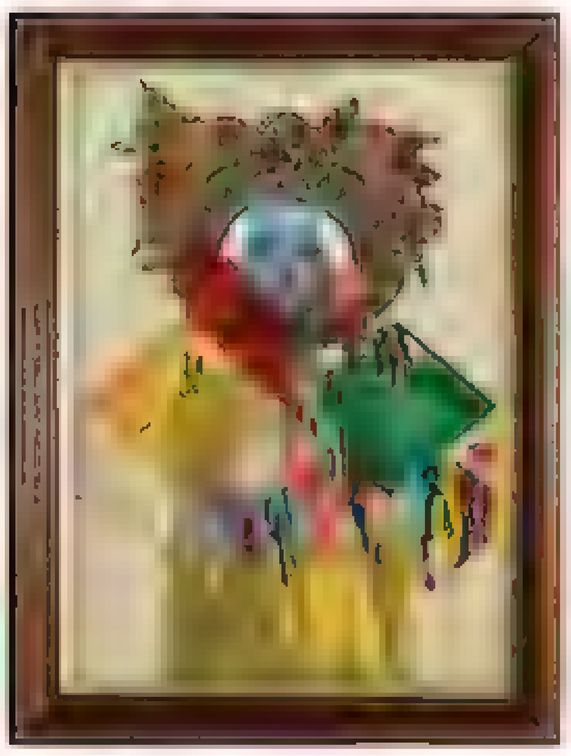


Aleksi's exhibition at the Maison d'Ailleurs looks at the process behind creating concept art

Would you believe us if we told you that the original Hildebrandt Star Wars poster painting was owned by the Louvre? Yes, the museum that's home to the Mona Lisa is also where you can see the original 1977 painting that arguably put commercial sci-fi art on the map.

Last year a collector in Paris purchased the painting from Alan Ladd, Jr" explains Greg Hildebrandt. "Alan was works at Liverpool's Penny Lane Gallery until 5 May, while Lob soft's Aleksi Briclot's concept art collections is fast-swinging Switzerland's Maison d'Ailleurs until 25 August. We could give both these points that what genre artists are now enjoying the gallery spotlight as both individual artists and as style ambassadors.

It's thrilling to see talented concept artists like Aleksi given an opportunity to exhibit their works in high-profile exhibitions



The head of 20th Century Fox when Star Wars was made and he owned the original painting. The particular collector who purchased the painting is a giant Star Wars collector. He arranged for the show on Star Wars with Lucasfilm and the Louvre." The exhibition was held in 2014 and featured over 400 pieces of historical Star Wars memorabilia, from the paintings of the Brothers Hildebrandt to rare action figures.

As we write, many of our favourite artists are exhibiting across the globe. Pin-up connoisseur Aly Fell is showcasing his quirky



Erik's fantasy imagery (left) draws on a range of established art styles.

There could be two main reasons why fantasy art has become so widely accepted and embraced: modern mythology and commercial viability. "Science fiction and fantasy art are in the realm of mythology," Greg says. "Mythological art has been accepted as fine art through the centuries in stages, but today we call it fantasy art."

Greg goes on to tell us that the masterpieces of the past by artists like Michelangelo and Bosch sought to explore human nature and purpose by means of a fantastical nature. While this fell out of fashion with the emergence of modern art, modern genre masters like the Brothers

LOUIS K MEISEL

Gallery owner Louis shares his thoughts on modern galleries

How do you select artists for your exhibitions?

Art is shown in my gallery because my eye chose it and research bolstered that, I like it and care about presenting, promoting and assisting the artists who do it, or the legacies of the ones no longer with us. I have done this for 50 years with the photorealists, individual artists such as Mel Ramos and Stamos, and many pin-up painters.

Why is pin-up art popular with galleries at the moment?

I began collecting pin-up art in the 70s. At that point I considered it all-American illustration, as the illustrators were where the tradition of realism in America resided during the modernist and abstract days of the 40s to 60s. As the collector/dealer of photorealism, this got my attention. I narrowed it down to the 10 per cent that was pin-up. In 1996 I published The Great American Pin-up, with Taschen. This was the catalyst that revived interest in the genre that spread to all areas, from fashion design to film, photography and advertising. I'm still, however, to my knowledge, the only fine art gallery regularly exhibiting the works of the greatest of these painters.

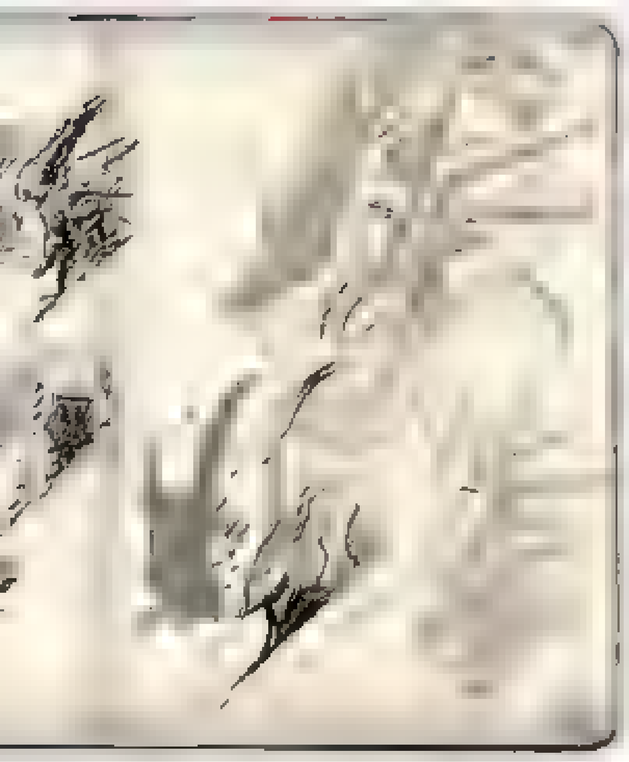
What do you think this trend holds for the future?

I think that the art establishment will continue to sneer at any form of illustration that's too "popular" understandable, non-intellectual, not multicultural or politically correct. Of course, with Rockwell, Parrish and Lyendecker selling for millions, there's bound to be at least some financial interest in showing this work in the so-called 'finer' art galleries!



Louis owns the Louis K Meisel Gallery in New York and was a leading player in the photorealist art movement

Continued from previous page...



With shows like Aleksi's exhibition, it's a pleasure to see sketchbooks and works in progress being as treasured as the final pieces themselves.

Hildebrandt and Frank Frazetta ensured that fantastic art would make a comeback in later years.

The nature of the collectors market may well be a factor in why fantasy art is now worthy of exhibition space. I think the biggest shift is based around the buyers. Quite a regular Enquirer suggests. There's a shift in what's popular and what's selling. The youth of yesterday, the kids that bought [illegible] fantasy novels, are now adults with smaller pockets but with the means to now purchase art.

Greg agrees with Erik: "I believe today that nostalgia is a very important thing to most people – we look back to times that we perceive were kinder and more relaxed and we long for something smaller. Today there are major art collectors all over the globe that consider genres like sci-fi and fantasy as fine art. Thank God."

With contemporary galleries like the Bonny Red Gallery or the Mason d'Amours actively championing the alternative it makes sense that the commercial side of this would map across the board, as Erik says: "The fact that it has slowly become a higher art form and that galleries are beginning to show sci-fi and fantasy is based on its malleability and research and [illegible]





The new Core Set card art that will be making its debut within the game includes this image by Brad Rigney.

Let the Magic commence!

Wizards of the Coast kicks off the build up to Magic 2014 with a brand new video game

Magic: The Gathering has unveiled a few interesting new products for the year ahead, including a brand new Core Set and the launch of the video game Duels of the Planeswalkers.

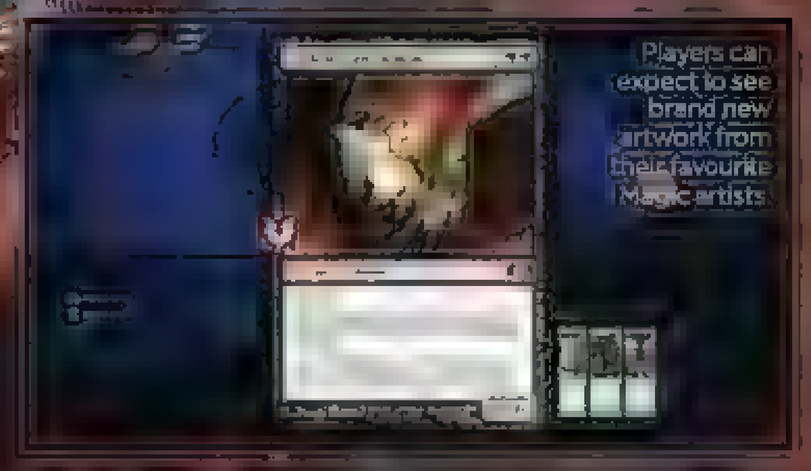
What we're most excited about is that along with making its Android debut, the new cross-platform title will feature 10 new card decks and will also provide a first look at the upcoming core Set of cards, while integrating them into game play.

The Duels of the Planeswalkers franchise has been engaging and exciting



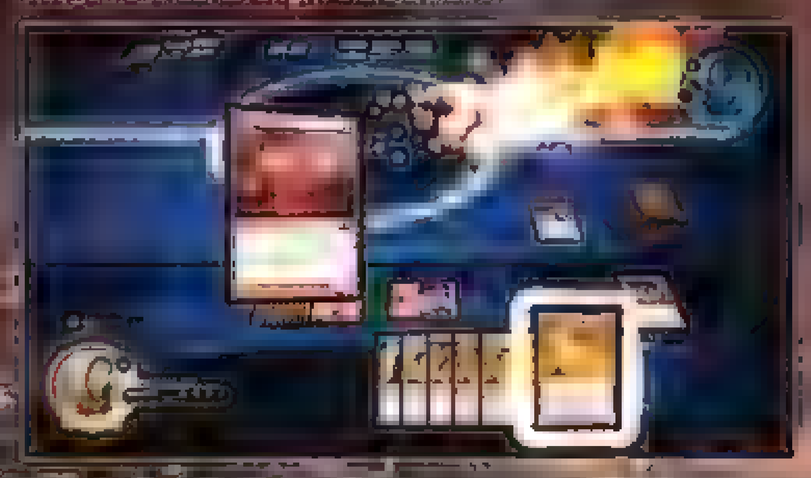
gamers since we launched it in 2009 and continues to be the best way for new players to learn how to play Magic," said Worth Wollpert, executive producer for Magic: The Gathering. "This year, with the addition of the Android platform, new features and a more focused integration between online and offline, we continue to deliver a best-in-class gaming experience."

To find out more, visit www.bit.ly/ifx-mtg



Players can expect to see brand new artwork from their favourite Magic artists.

Duels of the Planeswalkers will also mark a Magic first by being the first game to launch on an Android platform.



Fortunately, the art

Milk men Time-travelling dinosaurs, pirate queens and a carton of milk? Looks like nothing's too crazy for Neil Gaiman and Chris Riddell...



When working with Neil, Chris feels that his job as an illustrator is to complement the story rather than distract it



After teaming up on Coraline and The Graveyard Book, illustrator Chris Riddell reunites with Neil Gaiman for the upcoming children's book, Fortunately, the Milk. Like Neil's previous children's works, there'll be plenty about this tale of time travel and forgetfulness to keep adults occupied, especially in regards to artwork.

On hearing Neil describe the book as one of the craziest mad-cap stories he'd ever written, a new partnership was created. "I thought I could bring my sombre abstract style to the party, so I told him I'd be delighted to take it on. Neil is fantastic at giving his illustrators absolute freedom to respond to the text. Having worked with him before, I knew I could jump right into the story and have a lot of fun."

Fortunately, the Milk will be available in September from [illegible] good book to ask for. You can find out more about Chris's art over at **http://chrisriddell.panmacmillan.com** and read our full interview over at **www.imaginefx.com**

Bold horizons of epic proportions and limitless scope? Just an average day at the office for Bungie's Ja

A Date with Destiny

Epic proportion Mythic science fiction? If anyone can pull it off, Bungie can, as Destiny's art director explains

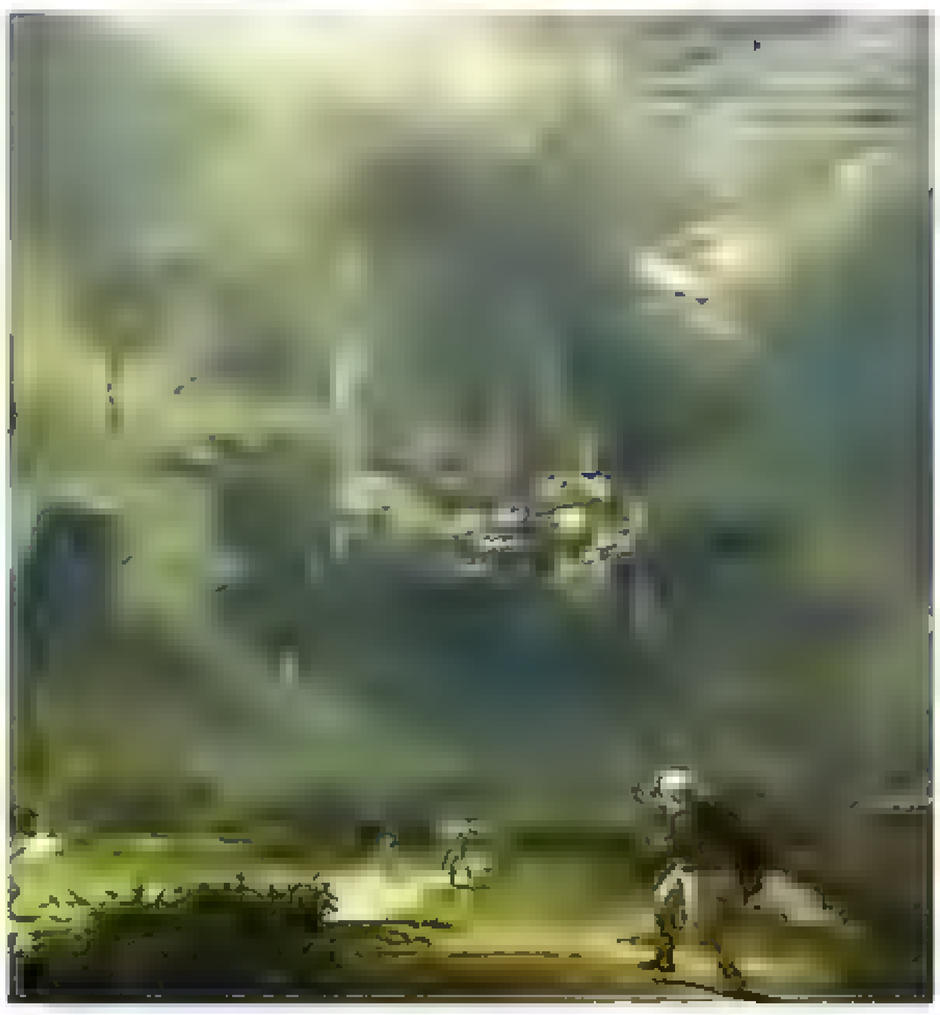
After a decade spent working on the Halo series, all eyes have been on Bungie in anticipation of what was to follow the iconic sci-fi franchise. And now, the game we all know as Destiny is well and truly on the horizon, and like its older brother, it's looking spectacular.

Destiny seeks to blend science fiction with medieval fantasy or mythic science fiction, as art director Christopher Barrett describes it. And it's a vast, open-world sandbox to play in. And once Asia's skyscraper now buried in sand to the 30th floor now becomes a dark dungeon where the player crawls through a window



n true Bungie fashion the visual style of Destiny aims to play with expectations and deliver a unique universe to explore – and care about. As Christopher explains this meant staying away from dreary landscapes and monochromatic colour palettes. "It was an integral part of the art direction to have nature but also skies, landscapes, colour, light and lots of visual variety. The world itself contains dark caverns and derelict ships but our approach is to make those things exciting places to be in. We want players to look at a place you can't wait to jump into and explore."

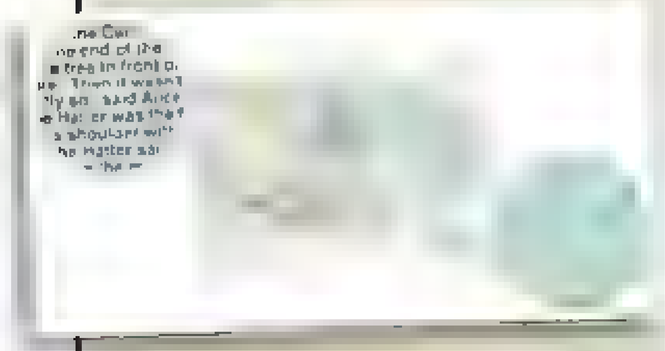
You can read our full interview with Christopher over at **www.imagine-fx.com**. And keep checking **www.bungie.net** for further Destiny updates.



Sci-fi with a medieval touch? No wonder innovator Kekai Kotaki signed up for such a bold project

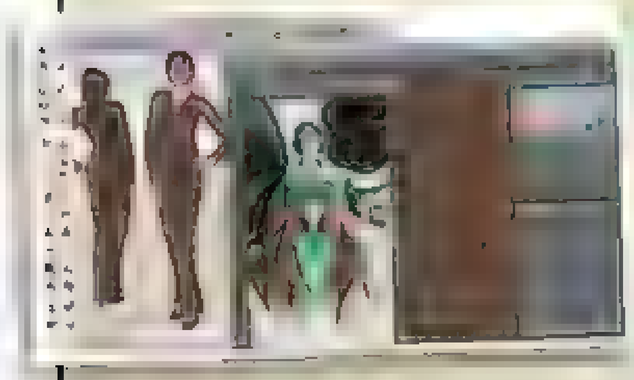
In short...

The latest news in brief for digital artists



Typography **Art for bookworms**

Great literature can inspire beautiful art and US design company Litographs are taking the connection one step further by creating art based on classic works. Each image is made using up to 75,000 words from a range of novels and historical texts, neatly assembled into striking pieces. Visit **www.litographs.com** for more.



New tools **Symmetrical SketchUp plug-in**

Artlandia has released a new plug-in for SketchUp that utilises its SymmetryMill pattern design app as a texture editor. Patterns created in SymmetryMill are now instantly available to use as textures in SketchUp. You can find out more at **www.artlandia.com**.

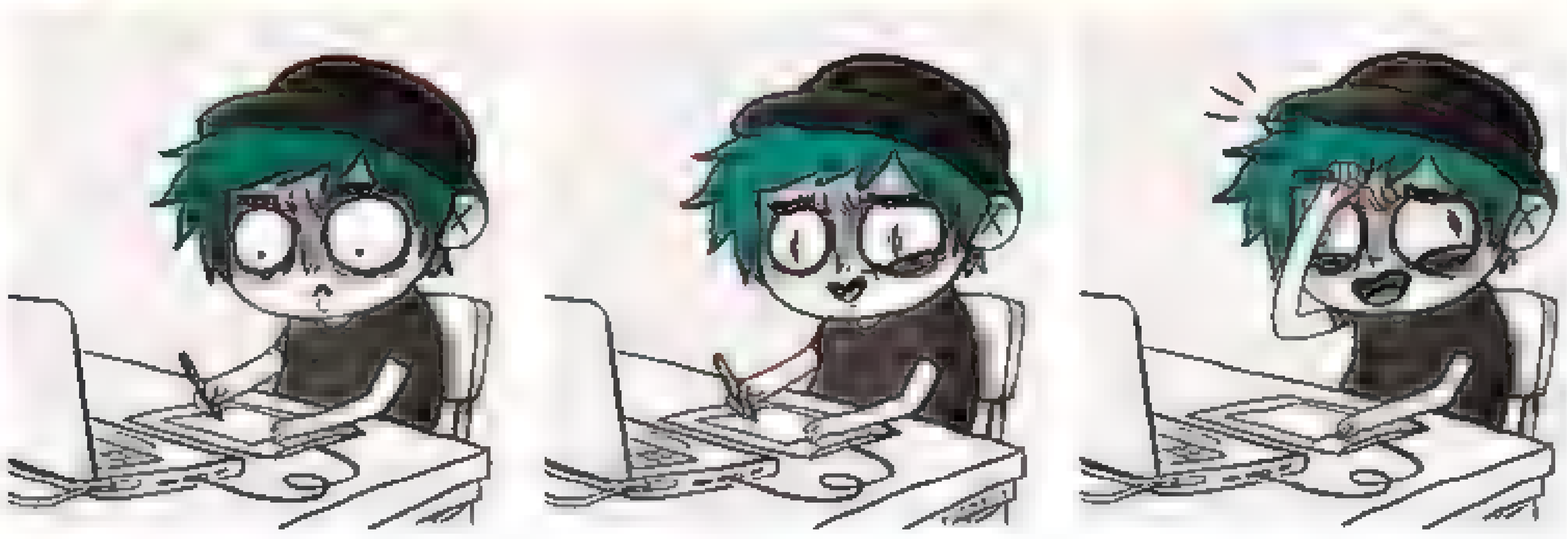
Innovation **Video games benefit from GloLiquid**

Young entrepreneur Glynne John Owen is launching video game marketing company GloLiquid. It aims to reinvent the way games are marketed, particularly for smaller developers. Keep checking **www.gloliquid.com** for more.





Hatboy
by Vaughn Pinpin



Fantasy talk Explaining the inexplicable

"We would draw life-sized comic book figures on the sidewalk in coloured chalk"

Future policeman (and artist) Joe Jusko starts out by committing small crimes... See page 48

In search of perfection

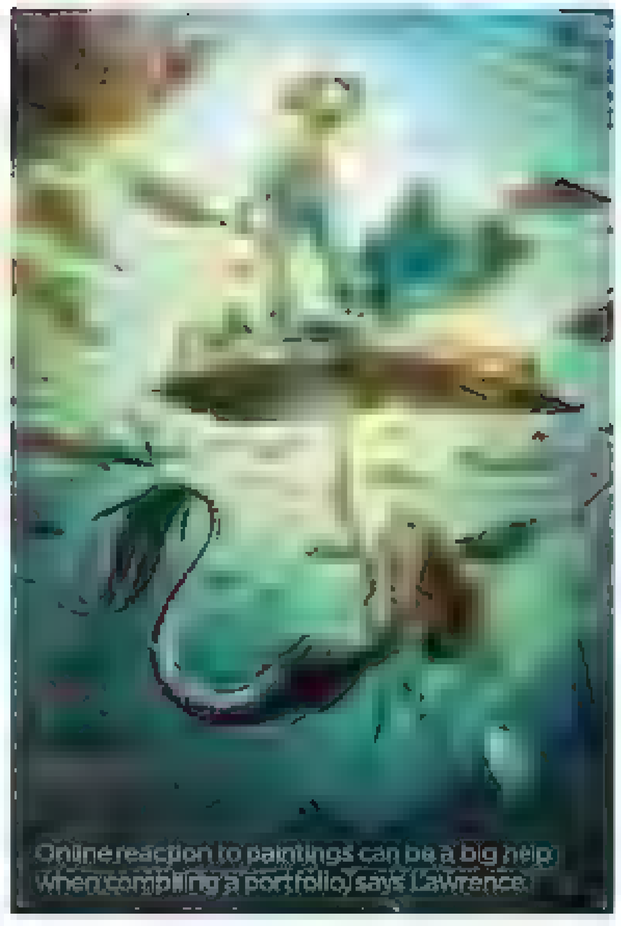
Bold move If your portfolio isn't reflecting your ambitions anymore, could it be time to start again?



With a career spanning over 15 years, the pursuit of attracting new clients ed freelance artist Lawrence Mann to take the plunge and create a new portfolio from scratch. "Some of the work in my portfolio had been there for a while," he says, "but the truth is that no matter how proud you are, there's only so many times you can show a piece when touting your wares."

The decision to revamp his entire portfolio seemed like a great way of removing what he felt was attracting a particular group of potential clients, homing in on specific skills. "It forced me to look at both the art style direction and the creative approach of my work," says Lawrence. "It has also given me time to take a closer look at my peers and those I want to work for. Of course, I'm keeping an open mind to a very loose format, as anything could change as the process moves on. With being such a time-consuming task, Lawrence has had to sacrifice his free time in order to make this all happen, but he feels it's a worthwhile task for any artist looking to reach new heights. "If they've got the time to spare, it's tough, but it's totally worth it."

Head over to **www.onemannbrand.deviantart.com** to see how Lawrence's portfolio develops further.





This time round, Lawrence has been paying particular attention to vibrant lighting and narrative

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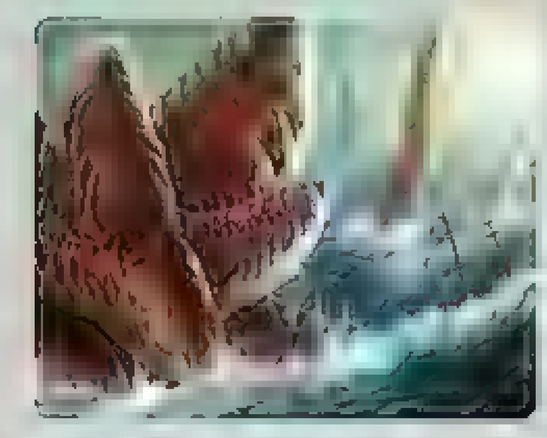
TAKE A BREAK AND VISIT

www.imaginefx.com

deviantART

+deviantWATCH

Here are some of the many gems we found on the pages of deviantART...



desmondWOOT

www.bit.ly/ifx-dwong

Looking through Desmond Wong's portfolio is a real treat. One minute we're admiring skies of colourful sea creatures, the next we're in the midst of an epic battle. The one thing these pieces have in common is the wonderfully vibrant style Desmond has poured his heart into over the years.



Darkki86

www.darkki86.deviantart.com

Mechanics are the name of the game here, and Darkki86's collection of finely crafted 3D artwork will surely bring back memories of Meccano kits. A staggering level of design has gone into each piece, with many guaranteed to make you look twice at your screen.



alchemaniac

www.bit.ly/ifx-gandrian

We're still in the mood for manga after last month's special issue so the delicate musings of Indonesian artist Gilang Andrian fit the bill. There's a wonderfully traditional feel to his pieces – you could easily assume you're looking at a dreamy watercolour or ink piece, rather than digital work



I like to stand when I work, so my main table is angled almost completely vertically. It helps keep my work loose – I'm drawing with my body, not my wrist

A little tribute to Norman Rockwell. He had a similar helmet on his easel

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

My dad built almost all of my equipment, from my easel to my computer desk. He's been doing this since I was little, when he built my toy box. I'm very fortunate

A classic comic store spinner rack with a few of my favourite books

Francis Vallejo

Old habits Although a digital artist, past affection for the traditional arts encouraged Francis to share a studio with a fellow easel buddy



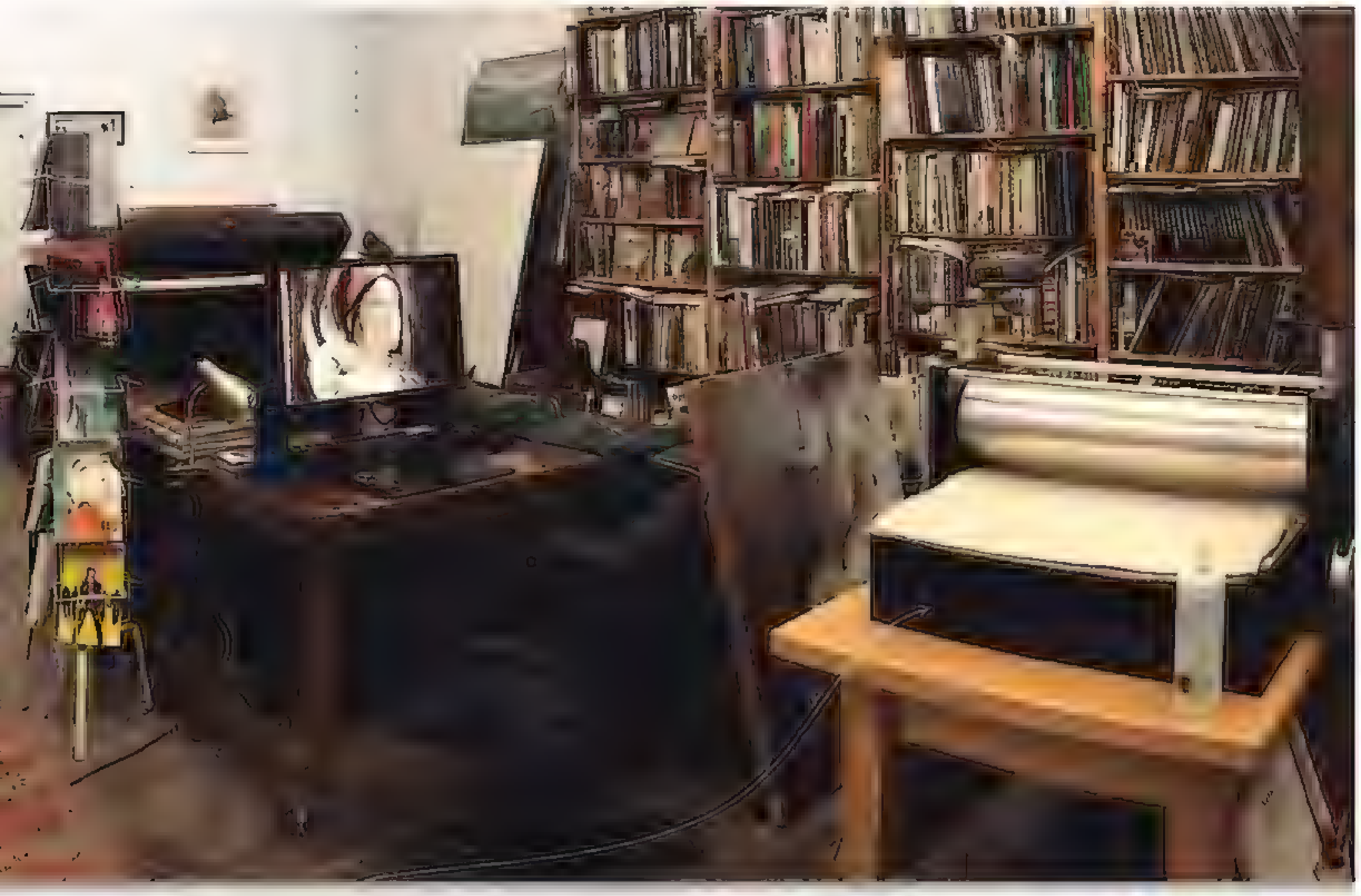
Three months ago I moved from Austin, Texas, to Sarasota, Florida, so I could share a studio space with the artist George Pratt. I began my career as a very traditional artist working on larger paintings and mixed-media imagery. Somewhere after graduating from college, I began to work more on a computer for editorial and comic gigs. I greatly missed my days in front of the easel, and so I decided to pack up and make the move. And I couldn't be happier. Welcome to our studio!

I live very close to my workspace so my whole world exists within a few blocks. To remedy this I like to wake up early (I'm a morning person) and go for a run first of all. Once I make it into the studio I select my listening for the day, which usually consists of a podcast, rap, another podcast, then some R&B.

We decided to eliminate the internet from the studio, along with a rule of no smartphone. This has been an incredibly positive decision and has increased my concentration tenfold. (George doesn't even have a computer there.)

use this large lightbox to transfer sketches to final paper generally work 18x24in or larger, so I need this beast!

There are five bookshelves here. One is fac ng inwards and hard to see That one is mine, while the others belong to George. need to step up my book game



This etching press is one of my favourite pieces of equipment, it's great for monotypes and all sorts of printmaking. I m working on a book made up completely of prints I create on this press

My pro ess gene y beg n at a draft ng tab e where I thumbna l a t the mage or mages I ll then shoot reference pho ography at my home where ve u ed turned a room nto a photo stud o Next I return to my ma n stud o and sketch out he mage ad ng some more deta s After that I scan in my s ketch move things around even more n Photoshop and pr nt out a f na sketch to trans er to board or paper w th a ghtbox

Depend ng on the d rect on m taking I work o t he f na v rs on on he ease pie s tab e or any comb nation o m xed a t s h res scan and then add any f n sh ng touches n Photoshop

Along with a diverse personal and commercial portfolio with a contemporary flair, Francis is currently a teacher and studio lead for TAD. You can see more of his artwork over at www.franciswalleja.com.



My taboret s a transformer The glass pal tte brears in two so can store used ous n the f eezer I has more gadgets and s orage than Op mus Prime



My sk ll s attached to a former clamp light arm so c can c p or to any surface and rotate to a ny ang e

PLANET OF THE ARTS









HERE'S A RUNDOWN OF THE EVENTS AND ART BLOGS THAT HAVE GOT US IN A STIR THIS MONTH. IF YOU'VE GOT A STORY OR EVENT THAT SHOULD BE FEATURED HERE, SEND US THE DETAILS **PLANET@IMAGINEFX.COM** CHEERS!

Nicola Henderson, Staff Writer

ALBANY COMIC CON

Convention | US

1 Returning for its sixth year on 16 June, the first stop has just announced an impeccable list of artists to inspire you and your comic creation.

www.albanycomicbookshow.com

SOONERCON 22

Convention | US

2 The annual art show remains a real treat for fantasy fans, which also gives the opportunity to purchase original pieces and rare prints. The fun starts on 28 June.

www.soonercon.com

ALBUQUERQUE COMIC EXPO

Convention | US

3 New Mexico's celebrated comic and pop culture gathering returns to the Albuquerque Convention Centre on 21 June. There'll be something for everyone here.

www.abqcomicexpo.com

DEEDEE CHERIEL

Exhibition | England

4 LA-based screen artist Deedee Cheriel makes her UK solo exhibition debut with 'The Spirit and the Infinite Longing' at London's Pure Evil Gallery, from 18 April to 12 May.

www.pureevilclothing.com

5

6

7

5 MATHIEU LAUFFRAY

Blog: France

Comic book artist and illustrator Mathieu Lauffray's blog is your portal into his world of pictures, works in progress, technical exercises and shots of the locos behind the trad

www.lauffray.blogspot.co.uk

6 PIOTR FOKSOWICZ

Art: Poland

Illustrator and concept artist Piotr has created many stunning pieces for card games, book covers and more. His blog also includes great fun art and personal pieces

www.piofoks.deviantart.com

7 NORAH KHOR

Illustrator: Malaysia

Despite only being 21, Norah aka Wolfie-chama has already had many of her pieces exhibited across the globe including New York, Japan, Singapore and Romania

www.wolfie-chama.deviantart.com

FANTASY SCI-FI DIGITAL ART ImagineFX Forum

Winners

Image of the month

Whether he's an Adam or a Fallen Angel, one thing is for sure – Frankenstein's monster is here to stay in the hearts of all fantasy fans...



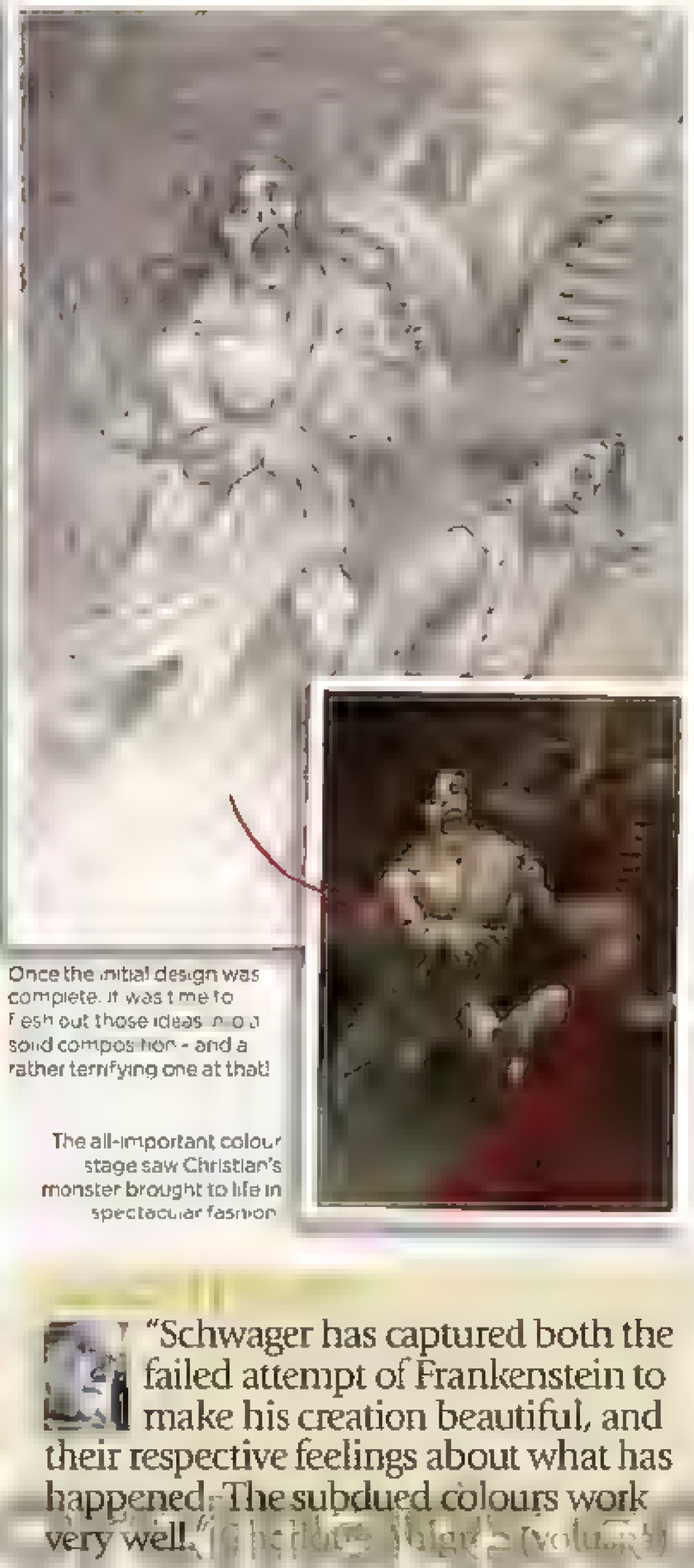
Recreating one of literature's favourite monsters while staying faithful to the original 1818 description was a popular challenge. Out of all the gruesome creatures lovingly stitched together, it was Christian Schwager's take on the tragic science experiment that led to victory.

"Although I was familiar with the story of Frankenstein, I've never read the book. Christian says. "So some research was required, because I wanted it to stay fairly true to the original description, while still putting my own spin on it. There was a fantastic line-up of entries and I was thrilled to come out on top by the narrowest of margins."

Frankenstein Revisited
Christian Schwager (schwager)
www.bit.ly/ifx-schwager
www.bit.ly/myfx-302



Christen's take on Victor Frankenstein's monster captures the menacing atmosphere of the original tale, yet remains decidedly fresh.



Once the initial design was complete, it was time to flesh out those ideas into a solid composition – and a rather terrifying one at that!

The all-important colour stage saw Christian's monster brought to life in spectacular fashion.

"Schwager has captured both the failed attempt of Frankenstein to make his creation beautiful, and their respective feelings about what has happened. The subdued colours work very well."

Join in!
www.imaginefx.com/myfx

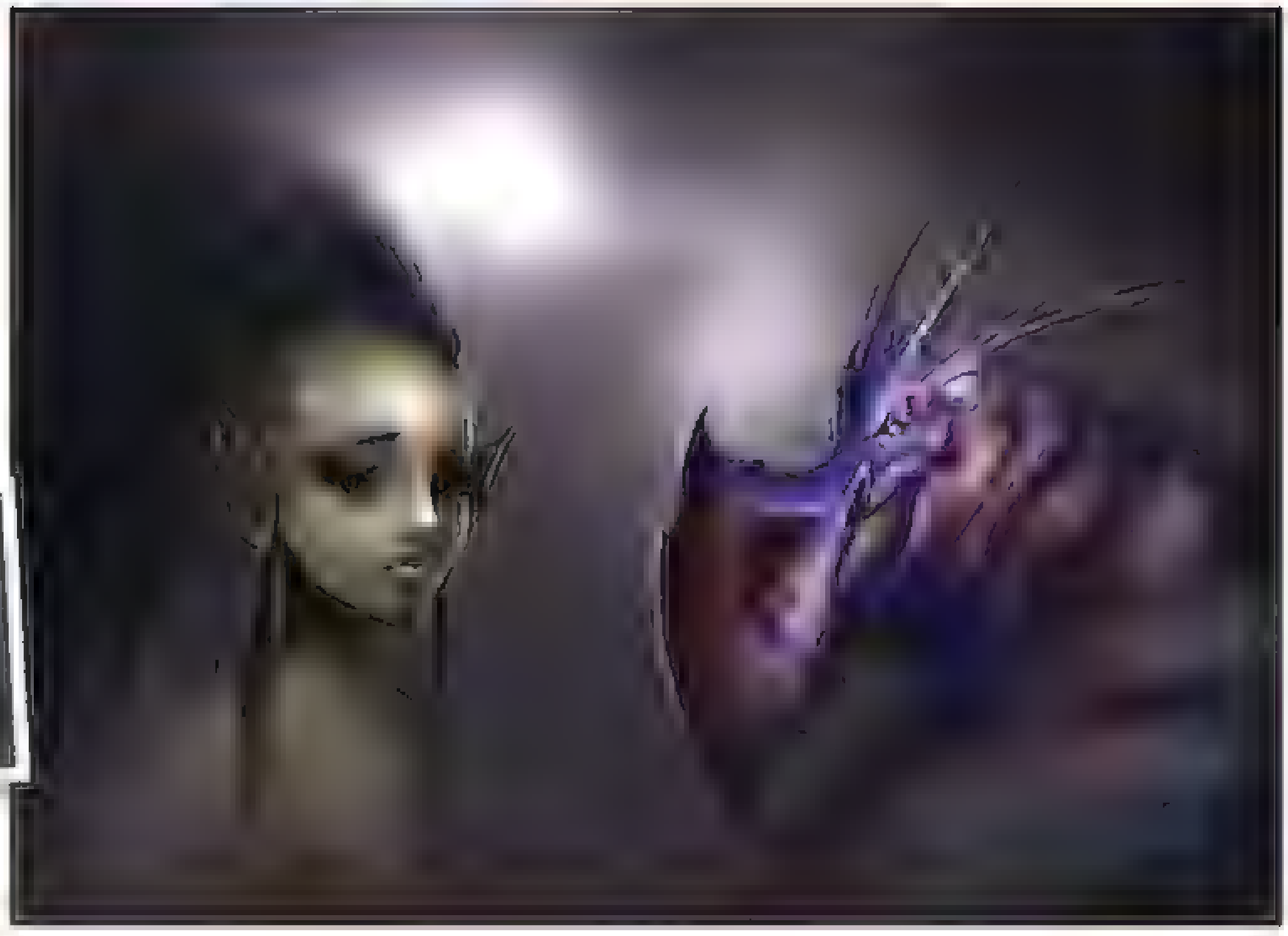
The Dark Crystal 2
Ian Core (G8crasherboy)
www.bit.ly/ifx-G8crasherboy
www.bit.ly/myfx-307



"With this being a challenge to produce character designs for both the Skeksis and the Gelfling for Jim Henson's The Dark Crystal 2, I decided to focus on the character's heads. For the Gelfling, I wanted to try and convey an innocent quality, but maintain a difference from the original design. This would contrast with the sneering self-confidence of the Skeksis – I hope I managed to get this all across! In the end, they turned out a little too cartoonish for my liking, but you can't have everything!"



For this challenge Ian tried to imagine how events after the original film would have changed the characters, for better or worse



Splice!
Barry Khodadad (kodabble)
www.bit.ly/ifx-kodabble
www.bit.ly/myfx-314



"With the brief looking for a combination of creatures, I took a literal approach to the challenge and settled on a bullfrog catching a horsefly. For this work, I started with references of a frog and a bull's head and built a rough clay model so I could get an idea of how to compose the image. I then made a final pencil sketch and scanned it into Photoshop to do the colouring. As I got near the end of this image, I thought it would be fun to have the bullfrog catching the fly outside of the framed picture, which is the final result."

Barry's creature was strange enough as a sketch, but colour seemed to really bring out those amphibious qualities.



Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



Contact the editor, Ian Dean, on ian.dean@futurenet.com or write to ImagineFX, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW, UK

Follow us on twitter: www.twitter.com/imaginefx

Tell us your thoughts on: www.facebook.com/imaginefx

New Windows needed

I've just read the letters page of issue 94. I have two Windows 8 devices and would love to get more ImagineFX support for my operating system. The Win8 Zinio Reader app is just okay (as indicated by many reviews on the Windows App Store) and it would be great to see a dedicated reader app for ImagineFX. Alternately, maybe you could pressure Zinio to enable you to at least turn the page when zoomed in. It works like that on the iPad, so how hard can it be?

Carl Tsui, via email

Ian replies: We're on almost all digital platforms now, Carl, including Google Play and Kindle Fire. We're developing new platform apps all the time. We're hoping to have a more interactive Google Play edition coming soon, so please keep looking for more news.

Reader recommends...

I've read your feedback page in issue 94 and wonder why you didn't mention Krita or MyPaint, concerning Ben Reynolds's question. Krita/MyPaint are wonderful and free (for proof, such as Krita master David Revoy, see www.deevad.deviantart.com). I'd love to see more articles about these software programs.

Sylvia Ritter, via email

Ian replies: There are lots of unique software apps around that need championing, so thanks for highlighting these two and I'd encourage our readers to take a look at David Revoy's art. What software does everyone like using? Write in and tell me.

Show support

I just want to say a huge thank you for mentioning my deviantART page www.raysheaf.deviantart.com and my art in the April 2013 issue of ImagineFX! Best wishes to you and the magazine and thanks again for noticing my art!

Stefano, via email



Stefano is another reader who's grateful that we featured his website, in issue 94. Keep making great art, folks, and we'll keep showcasing it! That's what we're here for.

Thank you

My name is Mariel Hester and I picked up a copy of the April 2013 issue of ImagineFX while I was at a bookstore. I casually skimmed through it and was shocked to see coverage of the Sketch Crawl I attend, along with my drawing and name, in the ImagineNation Planet section!

I have always wanted to see my artwork (below) in your magazine, so it made me very happy to see this!

Thank you for featuring the Triangle Sketch Crawl. I plan to submit my best artwork so I can hopefully get into ImagineFX magazine again, preferably in Reader FXPosé!

Mariel, via email



Here's Mariel Hester's sketch, first featured in issue 94. She was surprised but thrilled to find herself in ImagineFX.

Ian replies: It was our pleasure, Mariel. We're always pleased to promote new artists in ImagineFX! If you want to feature in the magazine again, please do write in and share your art.

Helping hand

I'm an architecture student who takes a keen interest in digital art. I keep reading your magazine and it helps me a lot. There's one thing, though, that I'd like you to cover. Being interested and wanting to pursue digital art further as a freelance career, I have no idea about how much I should get paid for my work, or what other loopholes there may be to look out for. All these things are as important as one's talent, to my mind, but people usually don't talk about it. Instead they just say things like 'follow your heart'. But every once in a while you need to know stuff like this.

Milind, via email

Ian replies: Some good, practical questions there, Milind. We've covered aspects of freelance work in past issues of ImagineFX, but it's clearly a topic that needs looking at again. Perhaps some of our readers would like to offer Milind some advice? What, broadly speaking, should he expect to get paid? And what are the most important aspects of being a freelance artist?



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We've still got a few copies, but you need to move fast! See page 53 for details on how to get hold of one.



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Artist Q&A

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The ImagineFX panel

Tony Foti



Tony is a US-based illustrator who contributes to D&D and Fantasy Flight Games' Star Wars and The Lord of the Rings ranges.

www.tonyfotiart.com

Manon Delacroix



Manon is a busy freelance illustrator who specialises in high fantasy, horror and portraiture. Werewolves are her favourite.

www.artbymanon.com

Eric Merced



Eric is a graphic novel and children's art illustrator based in New England, US, where he lives with his wife, kids and pet ferret.

www.ericmerced.com

Lindsay Cibos



US comic artist and illustrator Lindsay is the creator of the online comic Last of the Polar Bears, and author of several art instructional books.

www.lastpolarbears.com

Tuna Bora



Tuna is a freelance artist who's based in Los Angeles via Istanbul, Turkey, with clientele in feature animation, games, commercials and galleries.

www.tunabora.com

Mark Molnar



Mark is a concept and visual development artist. He's busy doing freelance work for international film, game and animation companies.

www.markmolnar.com

Kinman Chan



Having studied at Gnomon School of Visual Effects, Kinman has worked for Disney and Lucasfilm, and he also owns Kincept Co.

www.sparetimer.blogspot.co.uk

Question

How can you paint a snowy landscape that has form, using shadow and even colours in the snow?

Frank Yozellette, Kenyu

Answer

Tony replies



The trick to painting anything with form – be it snow, rocks or feet – is all in the lighting. If there's a single light source, the shadow patterns that result will more clearly define the surfaces they're moving across. Rembrandt was such a fan that a strong, single light source moving across a face from the side is now known as 'Rembrandt lighting'. Not only do the number of light sources have a big effect, but the hardness and direction of the light play a big role as well.

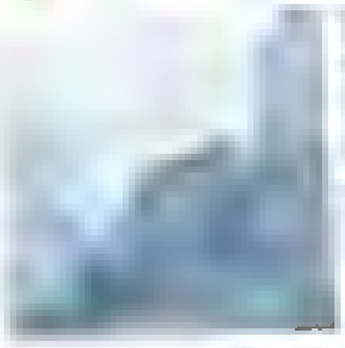
As a matter of fact, you can think of shadows as the glue that holds everything in place three-dimensionally. In the case of overcast weather, the clouds absorb and emit a lot of light down on to the ground, so cast shadows are faint. As a result, photos on a cloudy day rarely emphasise form in the way sunlight does.

Shape, value and edges all play important roles in describing the bumps and curves of an object. But it's the shadows that have the most dramatic impact on form.

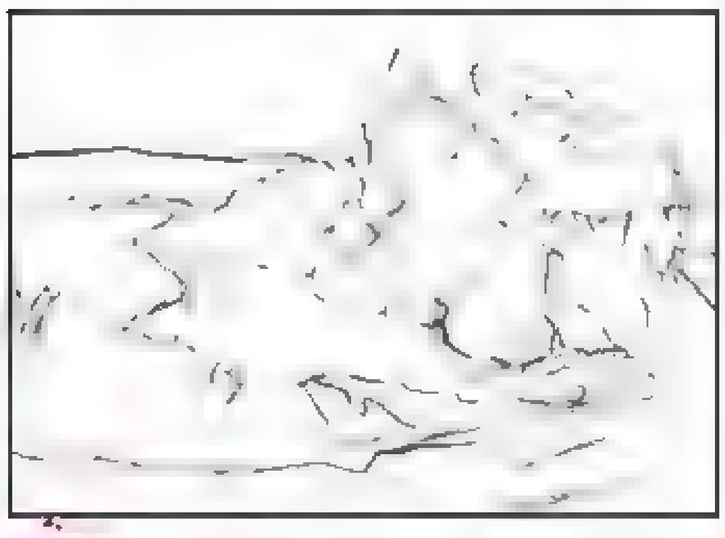


Artist's secret

DRAWING WITH COLOUR



Step-by-step:
Depict a snowy mountain scene



1 If we want to make the snow feel three dimensional, the first item on our to do list needs to be descriptive lighting. A quick sketch of the planes will help you better understand where the light rays will hit. Placing the sun a bit low and to the right of our scene will create longer more descriptive shadows.

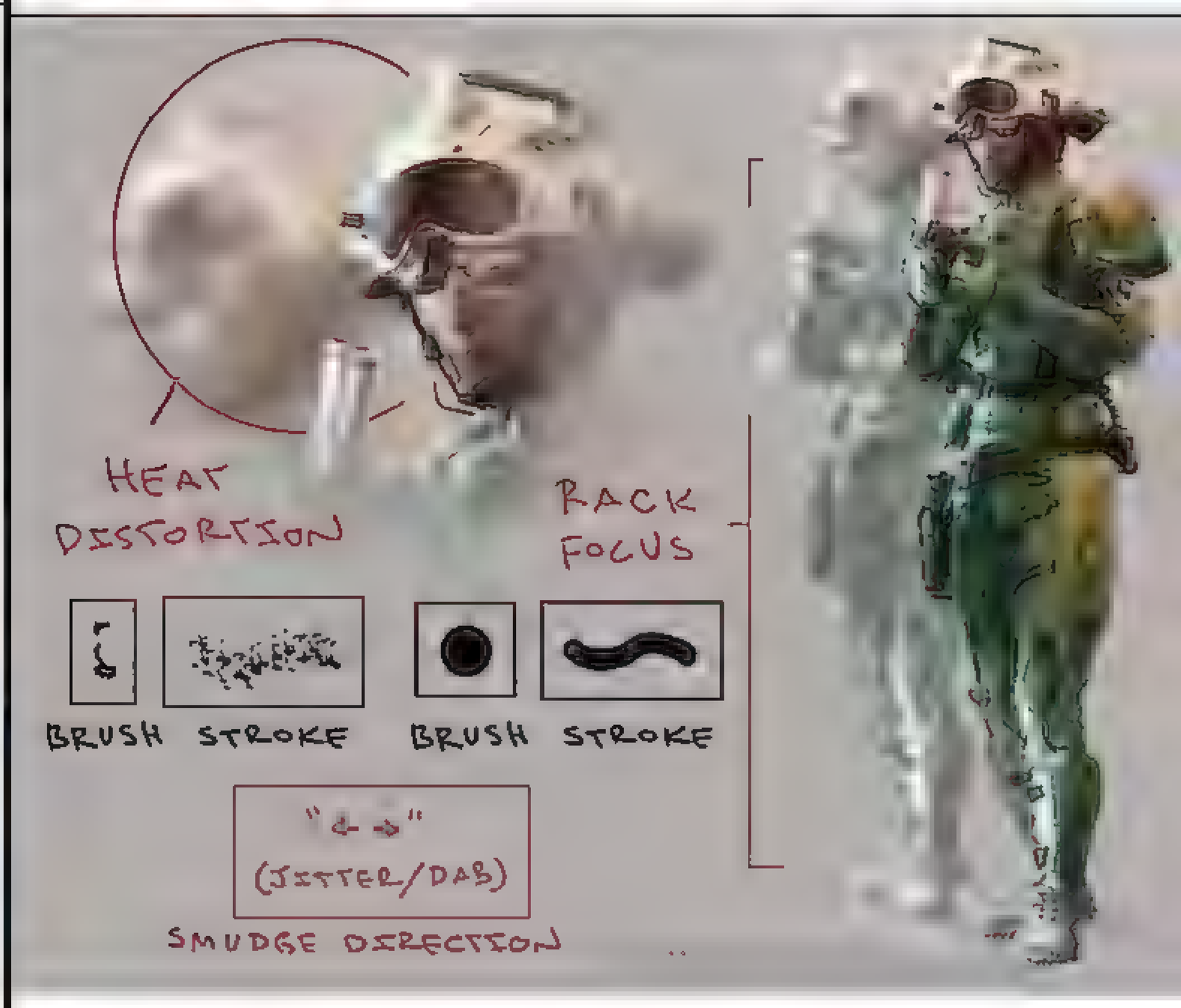


2 With the sun placed for optimal cast shadows, it's time to focus on the shapes. For cast shadows, think of light as water coming out of a tap. From a large source like the sun, it hits everything at a consistent angle. Be careful with your shadow shapes – they define the form just as much as the light side.



3 Whatever colour the sky is will be reflected in the shadows. Here the cool blues will help your hero feel like the frozen water it is. For soft, powdery snow, the transitions can be more gradual (although avoid anything so soft that it feels like mist). Icier snow has more highlights (reflections), and should be treated with harder edges.

Question
I have never used the Photoshop Smudge brush, can you tell me what's it for?
Jennifer Glends, England



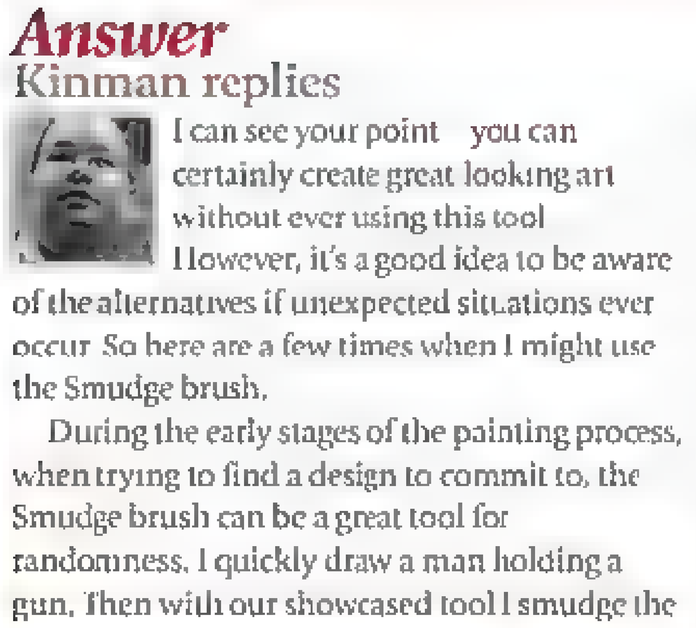
Answer
Kinman replies

I can see your point – you can certainly create great looking art without ever using this tool. However, it's a good idea to be aware of the alternatives if unexpected situations ever occur. So here are a few times when I might use the Smudge brush.

During the early stages of the painting process, when trying to find a design to commit to, the Smudge brush can be a great tool for randomness. I quickly draw a man holding a gun. Then with our showcased tool I smudge the drawing itself, bringing out some costume bits and helping me to produce a nice silhouette.

Using a textured brush for the Smudge tool gives me some desirable furry textures to distort my silhouette. I don't doubt that it can be used for a similar effect on painting other details.

The Smudge brush can serve as a great FX tool if we know the effects we want. Pictured above are my examples of heat distortion and rack focus, which is a film-making term. As an alternative to the Blur tool, the Smudge tool provides a good amount of control to clarify the lens I use, and I can easily keep any focal points in focus, too. With a scattered, textured brush and a few dabs I give the illusion of heat distortion. I thought it appropriate to place this just behind the gun to hint that it's just been used.



Starting an image with the Smudge tool can introduce happy accidents. A costume is brought to life in this example.

Artist's secret
EXPERIMENT ON THE SIDE

Question
How can I place an object within a jelly-like substance?
Gareth Thomas, Wales



Answer
Tony replies



Interesting question! Jelly has many similar properties to water, and the cloudiness of it also has a big influence on how any immersed objects will appear. More dense desserts are harder to see through, which has an effect similar to atmospheric perspective.

When painting anything clear, be sure to focus on the translucency. Whatever is behind will be slightly visible. The more wobbly gelatine there is between you and the sky, the less light will come through. Additionally, a lot of the light is being absorbed by the jelly itself. This creates patches of high saturation, usually around the edges.

All the local colour of the ring is overpowered by the jelly, but you can still use subtle warm and cool variations of that bright red to add interest. The shape of the jelly structure is up to you, but be aware that it will have a dramatic effect on how we perceive what's inside. Just like water, jelly refracts the light that passes through it. As a result, it bends the ring to whatever surface you're observing it through.



Focus on the ring shape: how it's warped and how its colours will change. Layer opacity goes a long way towards keeping things translucent.

Question
Please help me paint a convincing-looking nebula for a space scene
Chan, Malaysia



Nebulas are gaseous, dust-filled areas of space that can bring a splash of colour to any intergalactic scene.



Create depth by varying the softer, blurrier areas and harder areas

Answer
Mark replies



Nebulas are huge interstellar clouds made up of dust, hydrogen, helium and other gases. That's why you have to paint them exactly as other regular clouds and dust particles.

I always start a space scene with a black background and work with a really big sponge-like textured brush, which has lots of details. Then I start on depicting the nebula. First I lay down the base colour of the gas cloud, what has a middle saturated red, and then try to come up with an interesting shape.

On top of that I start to use various other colours, on Overlay and Color Dodge layers, to give the clouds more diversity. With this method I create the three brighter spots in the middle – these are going to be my main focal areas. From this point I only focus on these areas of the image. I introduce more details and try to create a sense of layering.

Creating the feel of depth is crucial and you can achieve this by varying the saturation and value of the clouds. Another trick is to create softer/blurrier and sharper areas, which can give the feeling of a fake depth of field.

The final step in the painting is to add the stars – this really brings the whole image together. I use a simple splatter brush and cover the whole image with small dots. After I've done this I simply erase back the stars with the same textured brush that I used for painting the clouds. This helps to not just create variation in the opacity, light strength and size of the stars, but also keeps the same mark making I used during the earlier stages of the painting.

Question
What are the rules for placing speech bubbles and lettering in comics?
Comic Noob, US

Answer
Eric replies



One thing to remember is that both art and lettering need to work hand-in-hand for a clear and concise reading experience. Not even the best looking comic art can save a story that's hampered by poor text and dialogue placement.

Generally speaking, for American and European comics, characters leading a conversation should have their word balloons placed on the left hand of the pane. This will allow for our natural progression of reading (left to right and top to bottom). The word balloon tail should be pointed towards the character who's speaking.

Almost any piece of art software can be used for lettering. I prefer Illustrator for its vector features. Both Illustrator and Photoshop can be used to not only create the type, but also word balloons.

When it comes to the lettering, make sure to use a point size that's not too small or too big. You will want to stay between six and nine points. Keep in mind that your word balloons shouldn't cover any important parts of the art. In short, the lettering should complement the art.

stevemiao.com

Question
I want to create a really cool Cthulhu, but have no idea where to start. Any help would be great!
Steve Adams, England

Answer
Manoncephies



Cthulhu has a big octopus like head and tentacles – so where better to start than lots of tentacles? I want my Cthulhu leering out of the dark, about to bring forth your impending doom!

You could try all kinds of versions of him, but it's important to take advantage of the gross-out factor of tentacles. You'll need to find some inspiration. I do a search online for octopus and squid photographs and collect a few together to refer to when painting. I also find some good bumpy textures I could add to my creature. Take note of how tentacles behave, how light falls on them and start drawing.

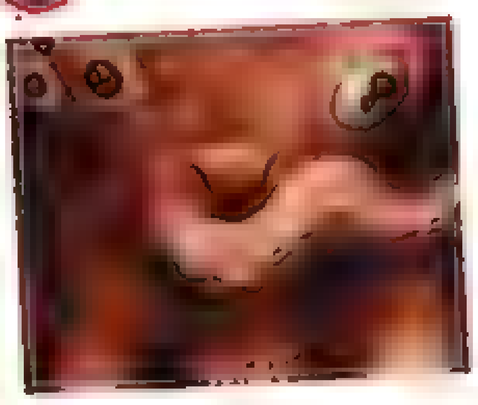
Try some thumbnails first, to see what could work in the space of your canvas – this is always massively he pful. When I start, Cthulhu is cute and kind of jolly, but I want him to be frightening so I produce a few drawings to get the feel I want. Don't be afraid to make mistakes, this is often where the magic happens.

Once my drawing is done I take a nice rough texture and put it over the whole image using a Multiply layer and fade the Opacity so I have a 'dirty' canvas to work on rather than pure white. Start with shadows and highlights and you'l. find he comes to life much more quickly because of the mid-tone background



keep the head receding into shadow and his tentacles are more in the light to give the idea he's appearing out of the dark

Artist's secret

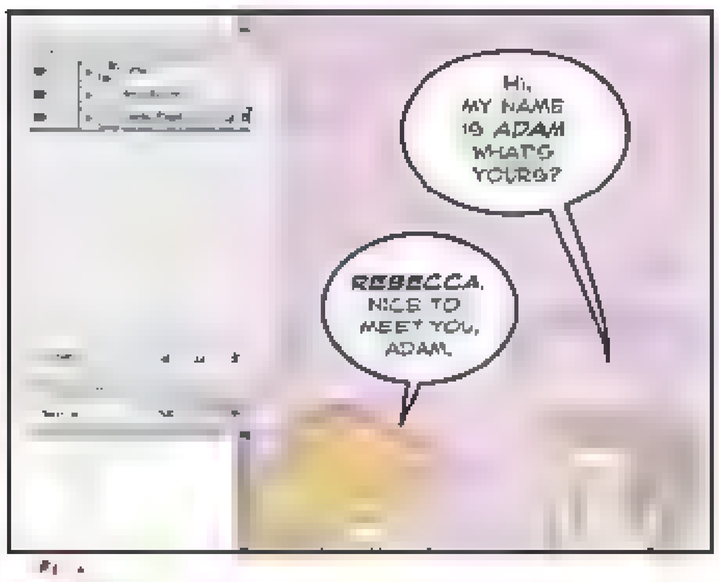


UP THE WEIRDNESS

Step-by-step: Put together comic dialogue



1 In Illustrator, I place the art on a new layer. To minimise visual tensions on, I lower the Opacity to 50 per cent. Lowering the layer's opacity helps you better place your type on the art page. At this point I've also chosen the font that I'm going to use for the lettering.



2 Next I open the script in a word document editor (I use Pages app). By keeping the script side by side with Illustrator I can copy and paste between the two. I do this repeatedly until all the type for that page is copied and pasted onto the canvas.



3 I like to keep things organised by using layers. I'll usually limit myself to three layers so as not to overcomplicate things. The first layer will contain the comic page, the second layer above that one the word balloons; and above that layer, the letters

Question
Do you have any advice for concepting an alien-looking spaceship?
Katherine Daily, US

Answer
Mark replies



To answer this question I want to produce a futuristic yet believable design. I imagine an invasion against an Earth-like planet by an alien race, which is coming from a water or fluid planet.

The bone structure of the cuttlefish and other deep sea animals spring to mind, and I try to mix this with the design of today's drone aircraft. I produce lots of thumbnail sketches of the overall silhouette, then pick one and do a rough line drawing to establish the direction of my design.

I use 3D sculpting techniques to create the main design. Perfect symmetry is a key feature in a design like this, so the sculpting software is a great help because I can achieve the creative work in full symmetry. Furthermore, I want to show the top and the bottom of the ship in one concept, and this enables me to design them in parallel.

After I sculpt the main shape of the ship, I add some basic panelling and other more mechanical parts on the underside to suggest the ship was manufactured. The right balance of plain panels and busier mechanical areas help to enhance the realism of the design.

For the paint job of the ship I go back to my original references and try to mix them – the satin black of the stealth aeroplanes and brownish yellows of the cuttlefish living around coral reefs. I want to make it slightly animal looking, but still menacing as a military jet. Finally, I make simple renders from various angles and bring them into Photoshop. I paint an aerial background and repaint the jets to achieve a film key frame, just like a cinematic shot.



A combination of sketching, 3D tools and Photoshop help me create this menacing-looking spaceship



Step-by-step: Design an invasion fleet



1 After several small silhouette thumbnails I produce a quick line sketch of the spaceship design, which establishes the general direction of my design. I try to keep the lines of the vessel simple and dynamic, similar to a deep-sea fish. Originally I wanted to go with a white-orange colour scheme, but decide to change to a black-orange one.



2 I try to stay as close as possible to my original idea. I keep the simplicity of the silhouette, but add a range of small details such as the panelling and smaller mechanical parts on the underside of the ship, to make the design more believable. The freedom of the 3D sculpting software helps me to achieve a more dynamic-looking spaceship.



3 For my paint scheme I try to mix my original references – the menacing satin black of today's stealth planes and the brownish yellows of cuttlefish that live near coral reefs. I add the saturated bright-yellow areas, because the black-yellow palette reminds me of the colour of the spotted salamander and imagine the alien pilots having a similar appearance.



4 Because I want to show the ship from all sides, render out various angles with the same simple lighting scheme. I place them against a quickly painted sky background and vary the sizes to make them look like a fleet of jets. After this step I start the painting process and add the necessary details to all the planes and the background to create a cinematic style image.

Question
Please help me create dynamic and interesting shadows?
Jamie Phelps, Canada

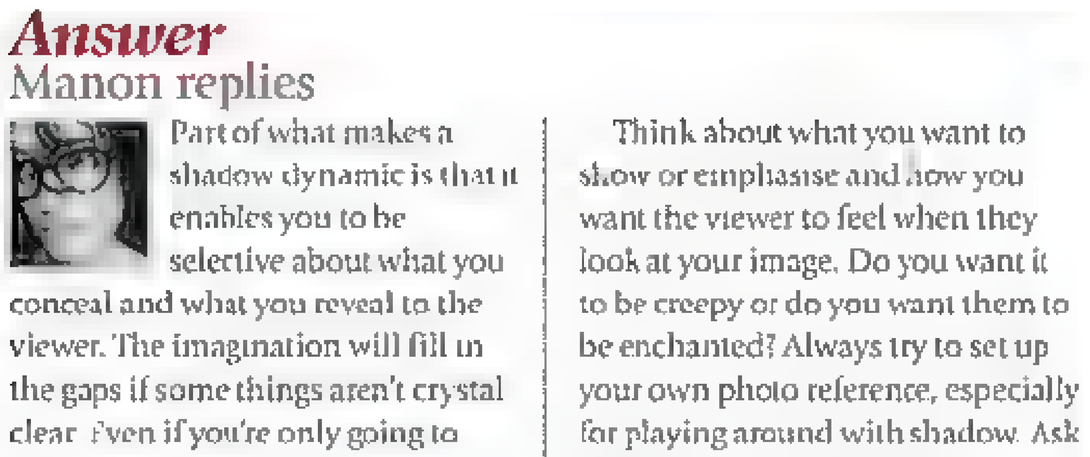


Answer
Manon replies

Part of what makes a shadow dynamic is that it enables you to be selective about what you conceal and what you reveal to the viewer. The imagination will fill in the gaps if some things aren't crystal clear. Even if you're only going to show parts of your subject in the light, you must paint all of it in the sketch stage. You can still decide at a later date what to keep and what to lose – in the shadow.

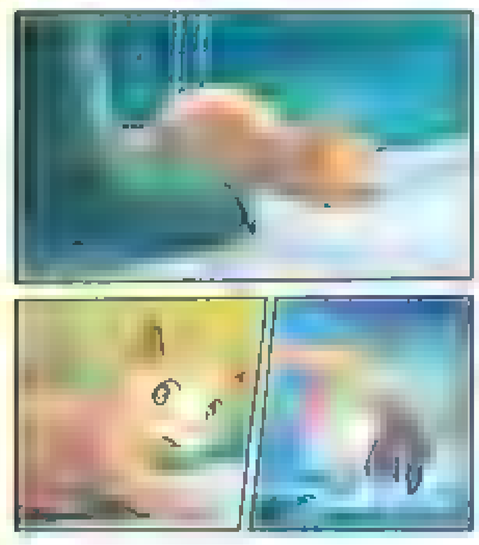
Think about what you want to show or emphasise and how you want the viewer to feel when they look at your image. Do you want it to be creepy or do you want them to be enchanted? Always try to set up your own photo reference, especially for playing around with shadow. Ask your friends to help you out!

I decide to have my werewolf looming out of the dark. He's very proud of what he's found. He's probably wagging his tail.

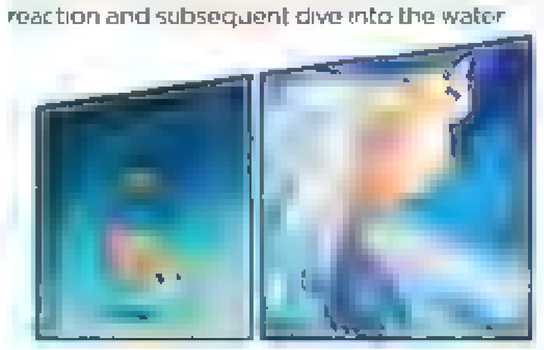


Remember where your light source is coming from – you can draw arrows on a different layer to help remind you. This comes in handy if there's more than one light source.

Question
How can I use multiple comic panels to create a sense of action?
Frances Pen, US



The impact of the monster's foot on the ice provides the setup for the sea kitten's surprised reaction and subsequent dive into the water.



This comic demonstrates anticipation and action, as the kitten builds up speed under the water and bursts into the air in the second panel.

Answer
Lindsay replies



The key to panelling action lies in what you choose to depict in each panel. Action has three stages: anticipation, action and reaction. Think about the verb for what you want to portray, and break it down into its key moments, right before the action takes place (anticipation), and the height of the resulting action.

Adding more panels can give an action nuance, but this will affect the timing. For example, imagine a person swinging their fist. In two panels, you'd have the wind up and impact. Stretched out to three or more panels, the character would appear to be punching in slow motion, so be careful to show only the panels needed to get the action and timing across.

Question
Have you got any tips on creating a caricature based on a photo?
Nick Houllebeq, France



I focus on how Audrey feels in this image: her attitude, grace, that certain smallness to her.

Answer
Tuna replies

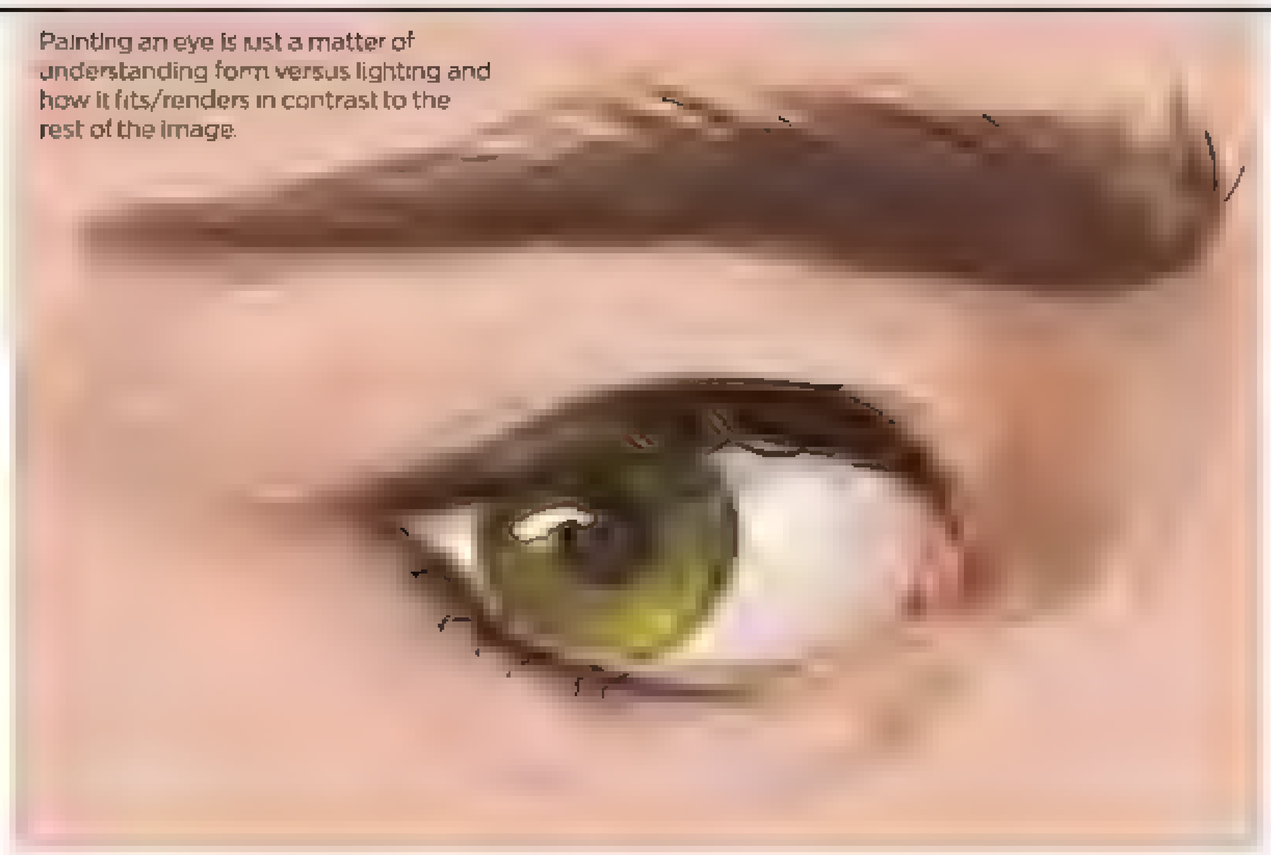


If I'm drawing someone from real life, I look for a key feature in their face. Most caricaturists consider the shape and size of the head first, then see how the main features (eyes, nose, mouth) are shaped, sized and what distance they are from each other.

I pick an iconic photo of Audrey Hepburn. She looks a little mousy under that hat and hair, so I'm going to push that by making her features thin and small. Her eyes and eyebrows are her signature feature, so I'm going to exaggerate those the most, but leave her nose or mouth alone. Good caricature doesn't exaggerate everything, but tries to concisely explain what the person is all about. This could be achieved by studying visual props, such as their clothes or hairstyle.

We could also make her look silly or ugly. It's about how you want to depict your perception of the person.

Question
Are there any art exercises that will help me to get better at drawing eyes?
Jose Piemento, Brazil



Answer
Tuna replies

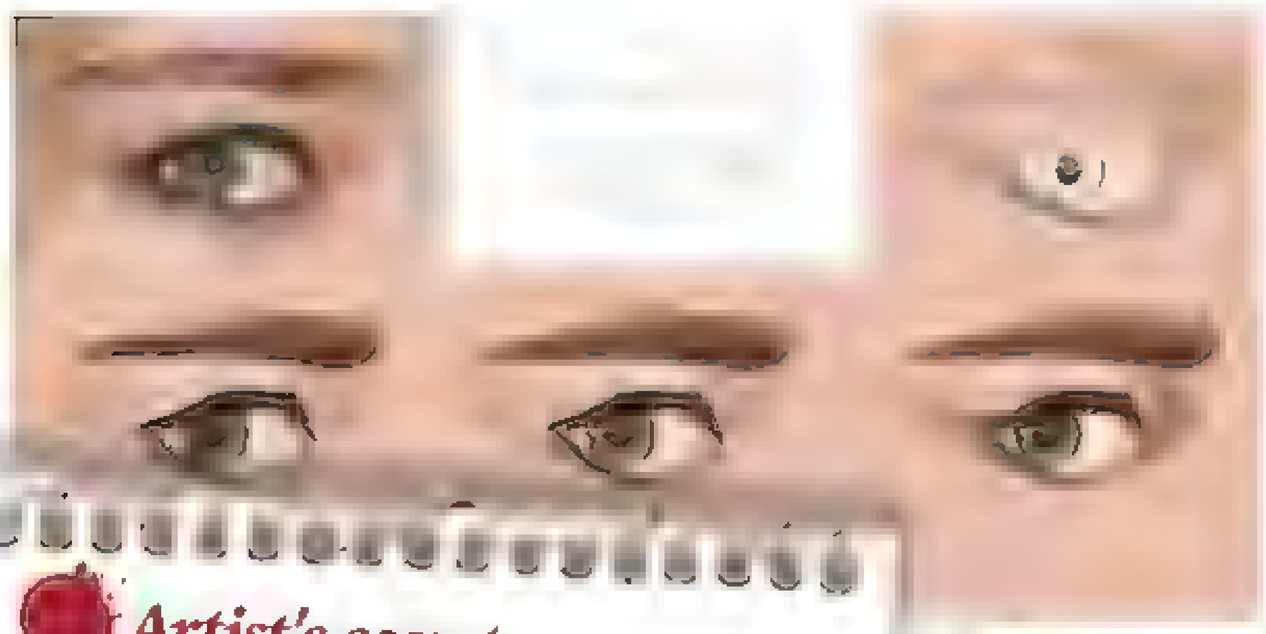


I'd start with a reference. The eyes are the focus of the face in portraits, but we still have to render them suitably for the occasion. In most portraits, they are the sharpest, most rendered part. But in a painting about action or an object, they could be three fuzzy brush strokes. This, and keeping to the simple painting rules of colour, temperature, form and value (for instance, understanding the white of the eye doesn't have to be white) are really the main trick. A great way to study this is to look at the work of different art masters.

Understanding the forms is helpful, too. I remind myself that the eye is a sphere that's bigger than it seems. A contact lens-like shape extrudes out of this sphere right where we look. That's why there's a sharp highlight around the iris. The light usually filters down and hits a concave surface (that aligns with the highlight and the light source) in the iris.

I do a loose line sketch. I then make it warmer because I want to change this centred, white, flash light to a directional warm light. I give it some basic form and local tone/colour. Then it's just a matter of following the rules I explained, reminding myself of the light source and being consistent with it.

I keep any sharp edges to a minimum, and add some texture to the skin and iris. These help a lot in making things look real, although if you look closely, I did very little work there.



Here I've tried to demystify the process a bit. Holding off on the details and using them sparingly is what makes a believable image.

Artist's secret
THE BEAUTY OF RELATIVITY

Question
How do I apply halftones for a retro comic effect?
Henry Prescott, England

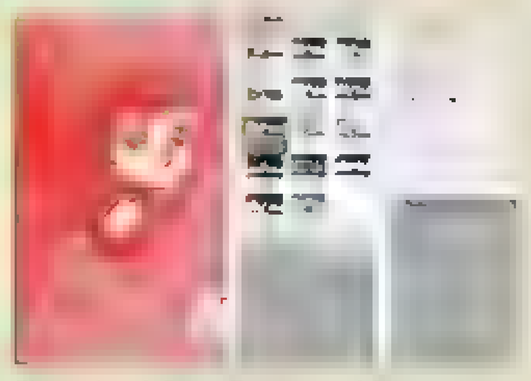


Using Photoshop I've taken this and created a nice, retro comic

Answer
Eric replies



You can use Photoshop to achieve this retro comic book look in a few simple steps. After opening my image in Photoshop, I adjust the levels to make the shadows pop out a little bit more. For this I go to Image>Adjustments>Levels. I set my input levels to 64, 0.54, 255. Next I go to Filter>Filter Gallery>Artistic>Film Grain. My values are Grain: 2, Highlight Area: 0, Intensity: 4.



Photoshop's Filter Gallery enables you to apply a range of effects to your images

Then I make a duplicate copy of my layer and make sure it's placed on top of the original layer. With my new duplicate layer selected, I go to Filter>Filter Gallery>Sketch>Halftone Pattern. For Size I choose 2, Contrast 9, Pattern Type: Dot.

The final step is to click OK and set the Layer mode to Multiply for the duplicate layer and Opacity to 40 per cent. Feel free to experiment with this method and settings to see what you come up with.

Artist's secret
CREATE A COMIC BOOK PAGE



Next month

ON SALE: **24 May**

How to paint water that looks realistic

Question

Can you ever use texture to emphasise perspective?

Ben Lewis, Japan



Answer

Kinman replies



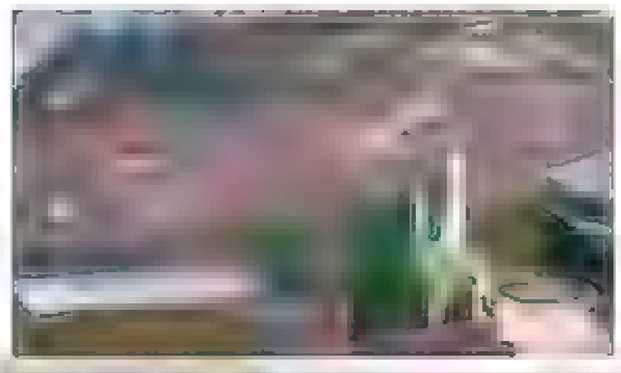
Absolutely. Texture plays an essential part in emphasising perspective – so much in fact that I use it with almost every brushstroke I put down. Texture solutions will differ for each piece, but here's some general food for thought.

Large establishing shots: we want to be thinking about the agriculture, living spaces, districts or terrain over large areas. Having miniature stories to tell will make it easier to decide how to disperse textures throughout the piece. The ability to see buildings and structures as simple shapes of texture and pattern will also be of use.

Intimate shots: when showing space in close quarters, be sure to pay attention to the details of all elements. Every object has unique textures and patterns different from their surroundings, and the camera lens may also distort those textures. A macro lens, for instance, shooting an ant on dirt will look completely different than a 50mm of the same subject.

Point of view or camera angle: being high above ground or low to it will affect how we treat our depth cues. A low camera angle means we have less canvas space to show depth, so each brushstroke should be carefully considered.

Here's my Photoshop painting of an aerial landscape with a few buildings. Each area of space has a different treatment of texture. I don't work methodically when I paint environments, so to demonstrate I'll share a few of the key thoughts in my head.



Think of agriculture, living spaces, districts and terrain to determine textural grouping and mapping on a larger scale.

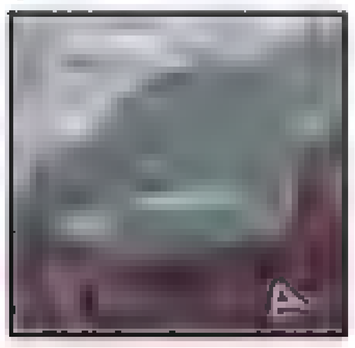
The perspective grid can help with the separation of spatial textures, patterns, colours, values and edges.

Artist's secret



Step-by-step: Paint a visually interesting landscape

1. Start by establishing a clear foreground, mid ground and background (A, B, C). I think of these separations as card cutouts on a spatial grid, and it's common to separate these 'cards' via distinct values. Alternatively we can separate by hue and saturation as long as they're defined clearly (not recommended for beginners).



2. The cards made in step 1 will become the guides for the next steps. Here I divide each card into three separate levels, and we can begin to make decisions to separate (again) each level. Any of the technical approaches to do this (colour, pattern, texture, value and edge) apply so long as they feel different from each of the other levels.



3. Once the first two passes are defined, fine tuning can begin. Each level we've separated thus far can be divided again into smaller zones and made to look different. These differences have a hierarchy, step 1 having the largest set of differences, step 2 having slightly less, and so on. Continue dividing and refining as long as your patience allows.



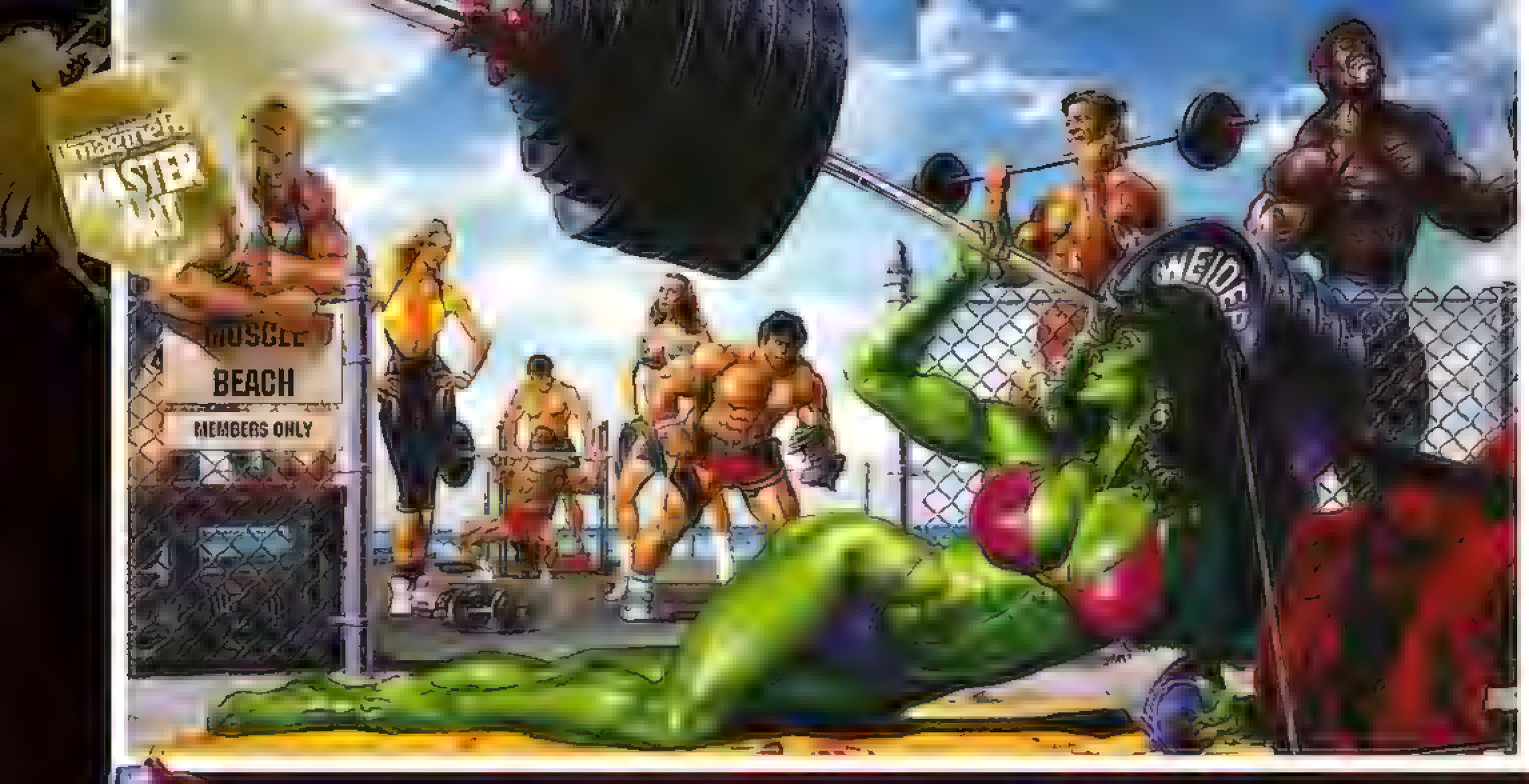
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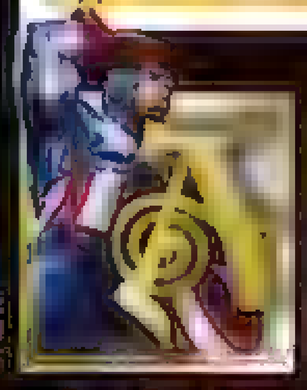
The Art of JOE JUSKO

A New York kid with a duel passion for comics and the police force, **Joe Jusko's** career was always going to be fascinating

JOHN CARTER

"The John Carter novels provide incredible characters to illustrate, none more endearing for me than the Banths — Barsoom's indigenous 10-legged lions."





Alphabet City has lost its hard edges. From the 60s to the late 80s, avenues A, B, C and D in East Village, Manhattan, New York, [illegible] and run down. Home to many hardworking families, there was also lawlessness, culminating in the Tompkins Square Park riot of 1988.

Charged to enforce a 1am curfew, police responded to bottle throwing by ploughing into the crowds on horseback and with batons. Gentrification has since softened Alphabet City, but it's the area's jagged history that influenced the formative moments in Joe Jusko's life as an artist.

One event that stuck with Joe was the murder of police officers Andrew Glover and Sergeant Frederick Reddy in 1975, when he was 15 years old. The two officers had stopped behind a double-parked car, had got out to speak to the driver, and were gunned down. The killer would be captured a week later armed with a hand grenade, but Joe remembers the night of the killings. It all happened on his street.

"They were ambushed and killed a few buildings down from where I lived," he says. "Watching the response of their fellow officers throughout the night gave me a true appreciation of their commitment and brotherhood." Six years later Joe would leave his blossoming art career to join that brotherhood.

> **"As a kid, I often sat in a bar drinking a soda and copying figures from comics"**

The neighbourhood had made its mark on Joe long before that night, however. Growing up with his elder brother Danny, a keen artist who had won local competitions, even getting his art shown on Jon Gnagy's Learn to Draw pioneering television programme – the notorious Alphabet City dictated what the boys got up to after school.

SHE HULK

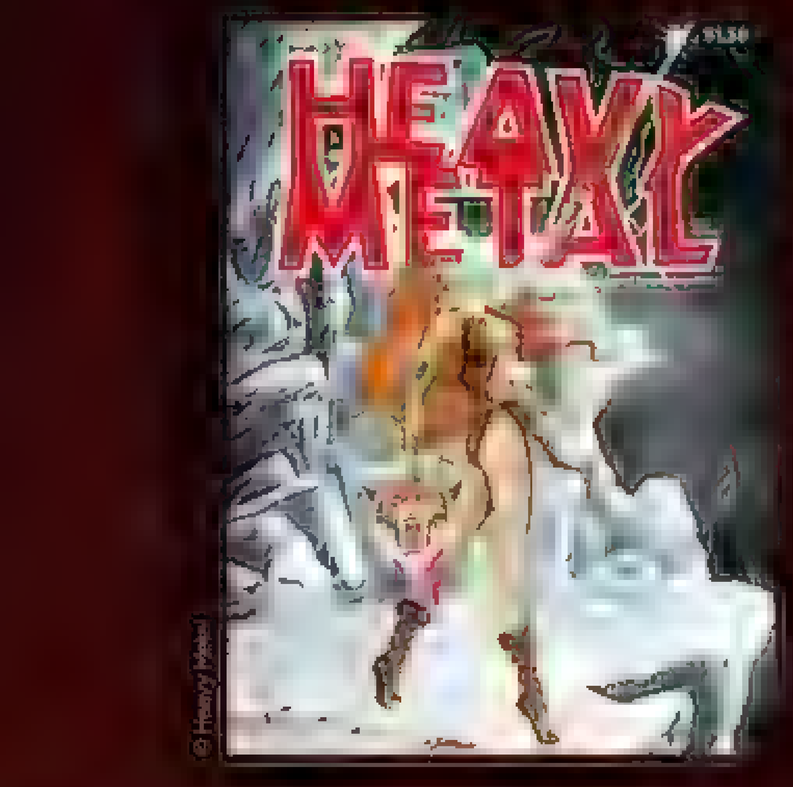
"Possibly my most popular Marvel poster. I used many bodybuilders in the background. I strive to capture the personality of whichever character I'm painting and I think I nailed hers here."

Joe was encouraged to explore his love for drawing, with his parents. "I often sat in a booth of the neighbourhood bar, drinking a soda and copying figures from comics, while my father talked with his friends," says Joe. "My mother was more than happy to buy me whatever art supplies she could afford, keeping me drawing, as the neighbourhood wasn't the safest."

Along with his pal Jose Carrera, Joe would take his love of redrawing his treasured comics to the streets. "We would draw life-sized comic book figures on the sidewalk in coloured chalk," he says. Around this time Danny's enthusiasm in art waned, but Joe's became an obsession.

MARVEL SMARTS

"I was a Marvel Comics kid from the start," says Joe. Young as he was, he picked up on the sophistication in the writing and



JOE'S BIG BREAK

Joe recalls the cover that started his professional career

"While it may not be common knowledge today, back in the late 70s Heavy Metal was the gold standard of fantasy art. When Howard Chaykin sent me to meet editor Julie Simmons with my few sample paintings I had no idea I'd end up on the cover, especially at the age of 18.

"Having my first ever published cover on HM was a coup, and while I was paid a nominal fee, I'd have given them the piece for free. It was based on this cover that Marvel Comics hired me, such was the magazine's high profile."

VITAL STATISTICS

It's all New York, New York ... and Paris!



Age
53

Current location
Syracuse, New York

Place of birth
New York City

Your best career U-turn
[illegible]

Top five New York films
The Pawnbroker (1965) West Side Story (1961) Barefoot in the Park (1967) Midnight Cowboy (1969) Rocky (1976)

Website
[illegible].com

Favourite non-US city
Paris

Your influences
"Who knows? I thought it was John Buscema, Gil Kane, Frazetta. Later it Frank Miller, and Howard Chaykin, and my overall personal favourite artist Simon Comerford. I'm not never non-American my own age anymore."

TARZAN

"This was for the 100th anniversary of Tarzan of the Apes. I like painting animals and natural environments so the [illegible] was here for to illustrate them [illegible]."

ARTIST TIP

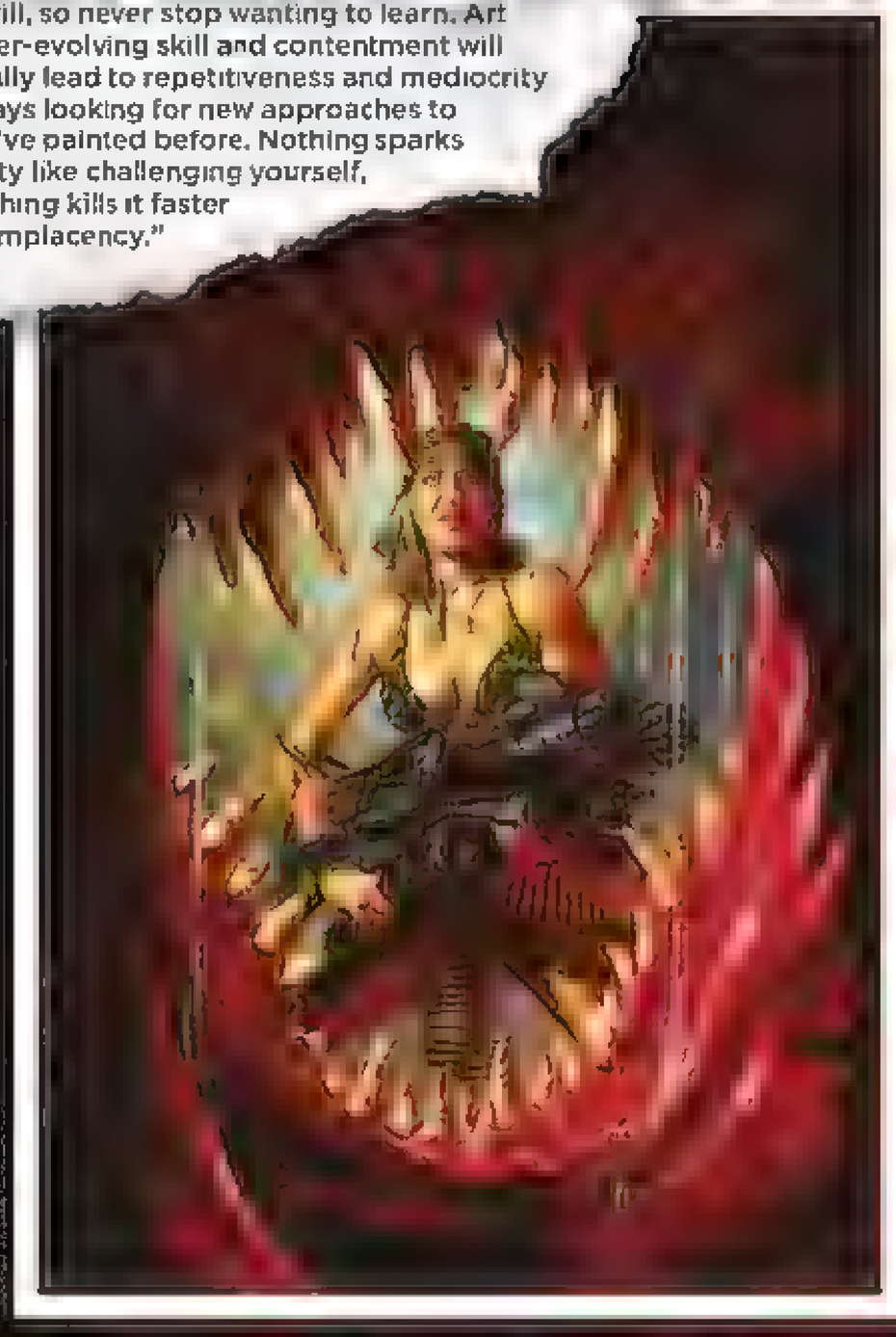
DRAWING IS THE KEY

"So many artists are anxious to get to the meaty parts that they forget the bones. Paint and colour can't hide poor drawing – it amplifies it. Having a solid foundation is paramount to attaining a professional result. I often spend more time on the initial drawing than the actual finished piece."

ARTIST TIP

THE POWER OF HUMILITY

"You don't know all there is to know, and you never will, so never stop wanting to learn. Art is an ever-evolving skill and contentment will eventually lead to repetitiveness and mediocrity. I'm always looking for new approaches to things I've painted before. Nothing sparks creativity like challenging yourself, and nothing kills it faster than complacency."





storylines that he felt competing titles lacked. "They didn't condescend to the reader and I loved the more dynamic artwork. My [comic] vocabulary was scored when I was in sixth grade, and I attribute a lot of that to the writing of Stan Lee and Roy Thomas." However, it was with DC that he would get his first break.

> "At the age of 18, I was working for the company I had loved since childhood"

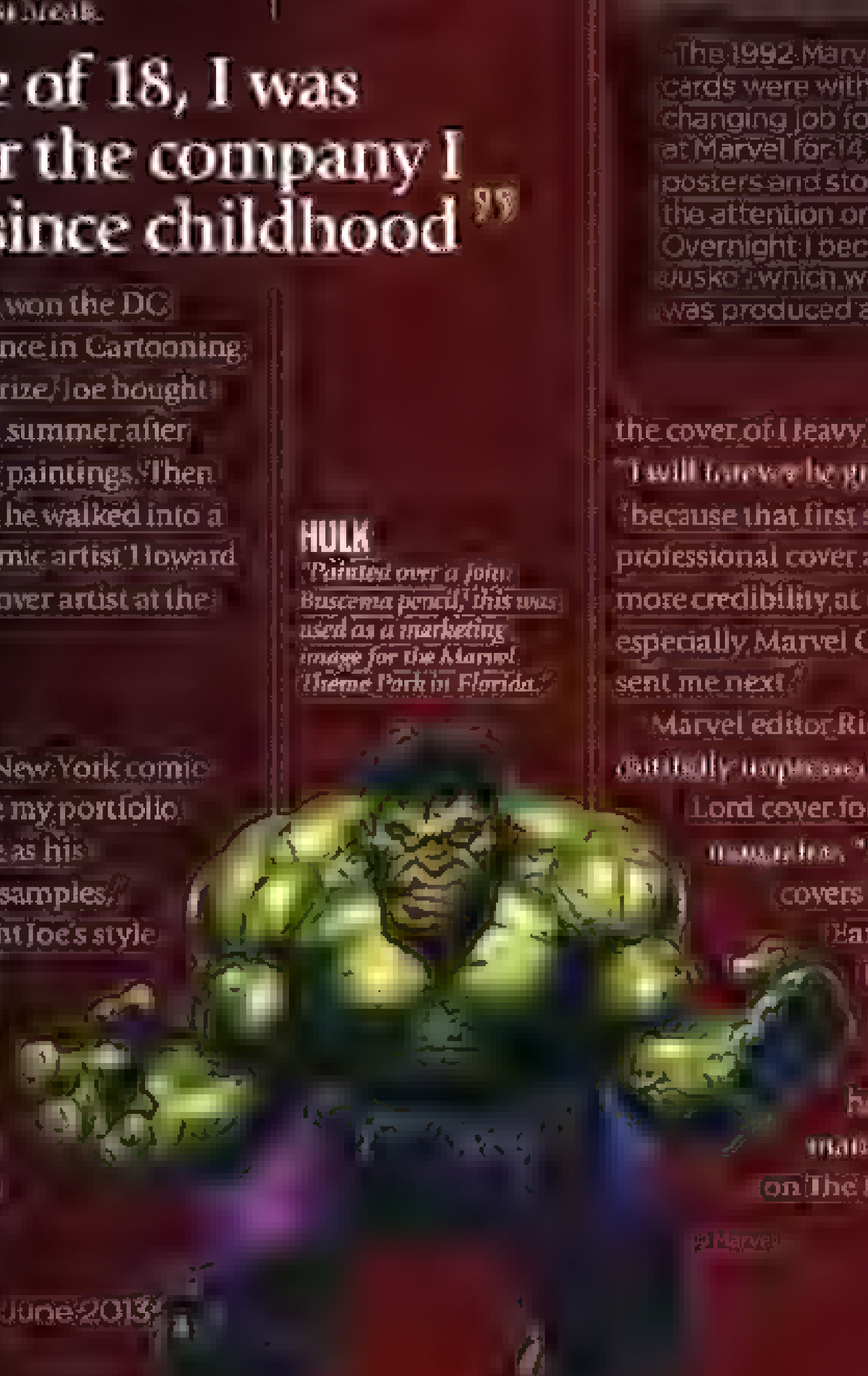
Still at high school, he won the DC Comics Award of Excellence in Cartooning. With his gift certificate prize, Joe bought paints and used that first summer after school to complete some paintings. Then one autumn day in 1977, he walked into a local comic store, met comic artist Howard Chaykin and became a cover artist at the age of 18.

COMIC CONTACTS

"I had met Howard in a New York comic shop. I happened to have my portfolio with me and he hired me as his assistant after seeing my samples," says Joe. "Howard thought Joe's style would suit *Heavy Metal* magazine, so put him in touch with editor Julie Simmons. He was right. Julie bought one of Joe's paintings, and it became the cover of *Heavy Metal*'s June 1978 issue. "I will forever be grateful to Julie," says Joe, "because that first sale made me a professional cover artist and gave me a lot more credibility at other companies, especially Marvel Comics, where Howard sent me next."

INFERNO
"Cover for the short-lived Top Cow series Inferno. The model was holding a Super Soaker water cannon that I modified in the drawing and then painted to look more like worn metal."

HULK
"Painted over a John Buscema pencil, this was used as a marketing image for the Marvel Theme Park in Florida."



Marvel editor Rick Marschall was initially impressed and gave Joe a Star Lord cover for the Marvel Preview magazine. "Several miscellaneous covers later, and along with Earl Norem and Bob Larkin – who became my role model during my early years – I became one of the three main painting cover artists on The Hulk magazine. At the age of 18, after working with Howard for about six months, I was now working on my own for the company I had loved since childhood. I worked almost exclusively for Marvel for the next 14 years, with one temporary, if abrupt, detour."

USING THE FORCE

In 1981 Joe was getting steady work from Marvel, but not always enough to support himself. A 15-year moratorium on hiring in the New York police force ended, and he saw his chance to get a steady pay check and fulfil a childhood ambition to be a cop. Ironically, his workload at Marvel increased just as he was accepted into the academy, painting covers for Marvel's premier black and white magazine The Savage Sword of Conan.

MARVEL MASTER

After 14 years working for Marvel, everything changed

The 1992 Marvel Masterpieces trading cards were without a doubt the career changing job for me. I'd been working at Marvel for 14 years painting covers, posters and stories, but nothing else got the attention or acclaim of this project. Overnight I became 'Master Artist Joe Jusko', which was ironic since the art was produced at such a speed to accommodate the extreme deadline. While not great paintings overall they made great cards, and the unexpected impact of that set raised my profile to a whole new level. I liken it to acting, where one can constantly work for years and years until landing that one role that gets everyone's attention. This was my one role.

TOMB RAIDER

"A page for the fully painted book Tomb Raider: The Greatest Treasure of All (2005). It's the work I'm most proud of, but also my biggest disappointment. No one picked up on it and efforts to get it reprinted have proven futile."



© Dynamite Comics

JOHN CARTER

"One of my all-time favourite pieces. The monochromatic palette adds to the pulpy, otherworldly feel."

Joe really enjoyed being a New York police officer. "I did no art work during the first year because it was spent in the academy and a street training unit. I loved being a cop," Joe says. "I saw and did things that can't be explained to most people, but soon my passion for art overtook my affinity for police work and I re-entered the art field."

More Marvel commissions came Joe's way. In 1992 he worked on their Marvel Masterpieces trading cards, which remains

> "It's my nature to be a perfectionist. If I start something it's hard to let go"

his single most career-boosting assignment. "Virtually raising my professional profile almost overnight after 14 years in the business," Joe says. "They're not my best works by far, as I had a mere 92 days to produce 104 paintings. But they made great cards. To this day, I sign more of those cards than anything else I've done."

In recent years Joe's especially proud of his work on his Edgar Rice Burroughs-related art for the Warlord of Mars comics and for ERB, Inc, for which he painted four large pieces to commemorate Tarzan's 100th anniversary.

Over the course of his 35-year career, Joe's strict approach to his craft has survived intact. "It's in my nature to be a bit of a perfectionist," he tells us. "I'm a Virgo, if you believe in astrology, and that's a major personality trait. If I start something it's hard to get me to ever let it go. I was always just determined to get better. And I still am."

Traditional skills

PAINTING A REGAL-LOOKING VAMPIRELLA, THE JUSKO WAY

As well as Marvel's Hulk and She Hulk, John Carter and Tarzan, Joe has worked closely with Forrest J Ackerman's Vampirella over the years. Jose Gonzalez and Trina Robbins helped shape Vampi's look, but this is how Joe paints the first lady of the undead

After receiving universal praise for his Marvel Masterpieces in 1992, Joe got a commission to breathe life into the vampire vixen Vampirella. Here the artist takes us through in detail how he created his cover for Harris Comics' 1996 Vampirella special Blood Lust.

1 Pencil illustration

Here's my finished working pencil drawing on Bainbridge 80 cold pressed double thick illustration board. I work in acrylics utilising many different techniques within the same painting. I wash transparently, lay in solid base colours and build up from there: scumble (essentially dry brush blending) colours for grades, blends and highlights, and glaze transparent colours to enhance colour or reduce contrast. I never wet blend. Acrylics dry too quickly and retarders alter the paint's consistency too much for me. I work on unprimed board as the washes and glazes tend to streak if I prime.



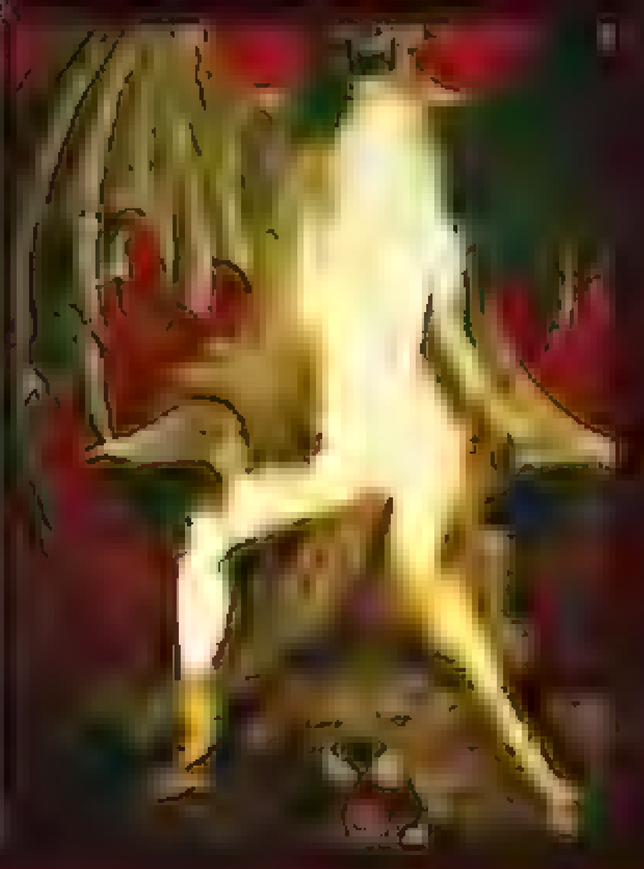


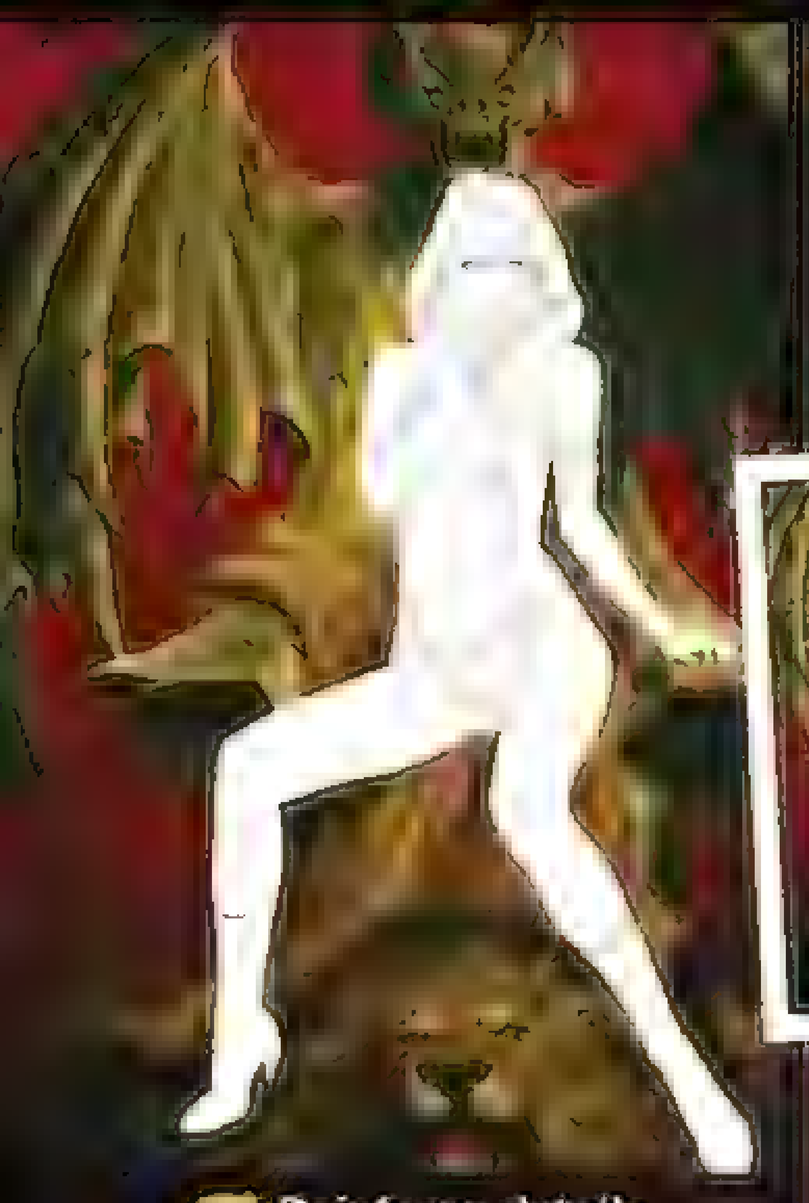
2 Masking technique

After masking off the foreground elements with a liberal amount of Winsor & Newton Art Masking Fluid I use the scumble/drybrush technique to blend the background using Cadmium Red Deep and Hookers Green Deep. I then peel off the mask with a rubber cement pick up. It should peel off in large pieces, leaving only the edges to clean with the pick up. You need a 100 per cent rag paper or the mask will damage the surface on removal. Don't paint too heavily or the edge will have a ridge that'll be impossible to work with.

3 Tackle the background

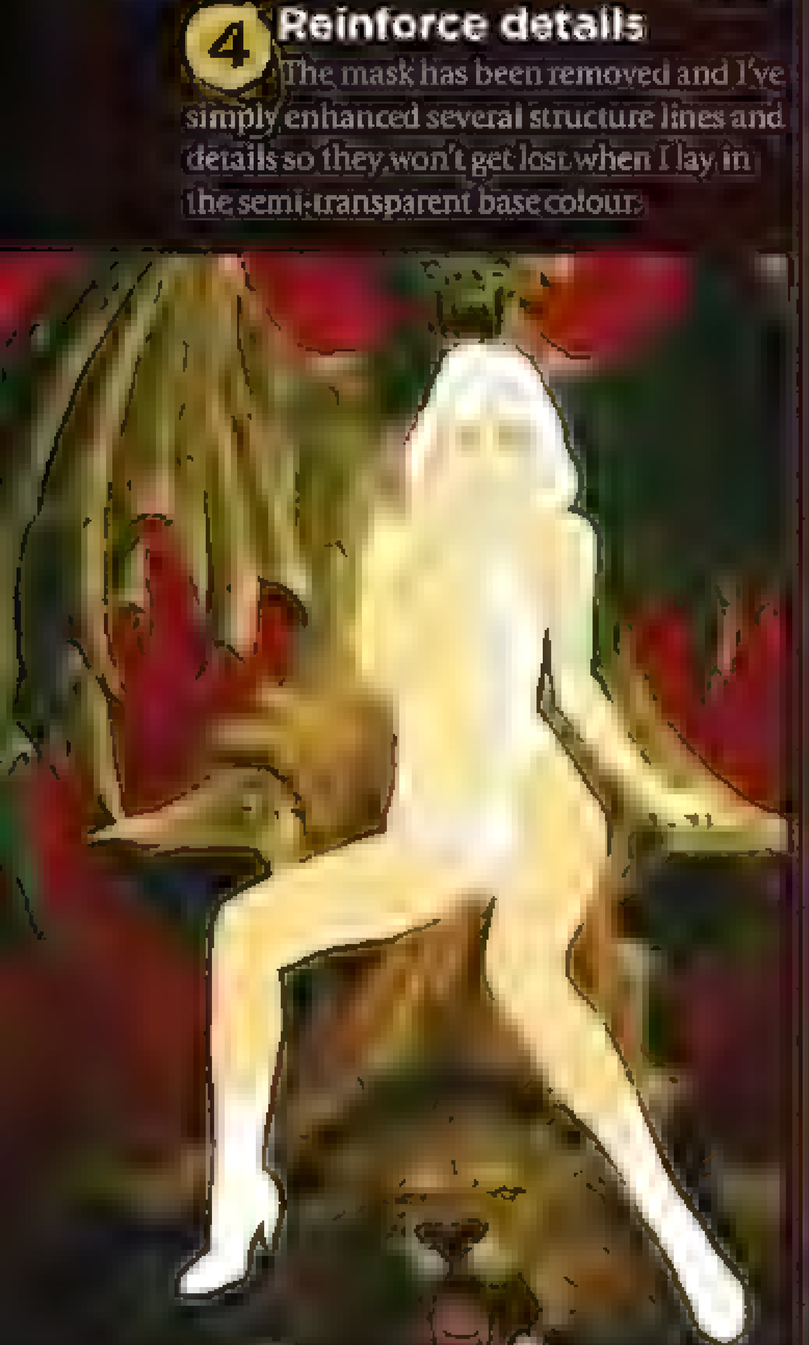
After re-masking the Vampirella figure I paint the throne and lion skin. I always work from the background forward because I find it infinitely easier to integrate the figure to the background than the other way around. I work section by section as blocking in the entire piece until it's all a half-muddled mess confuses my thought process. It's just the way my mind works. The throne is painted with Liquitex Bronze Yellow, Raw Umber, Hookers Green Deep and highlighted with Parchment and Yellow Ochre. The same colours are used on the lion, as well as Raw Sienna.





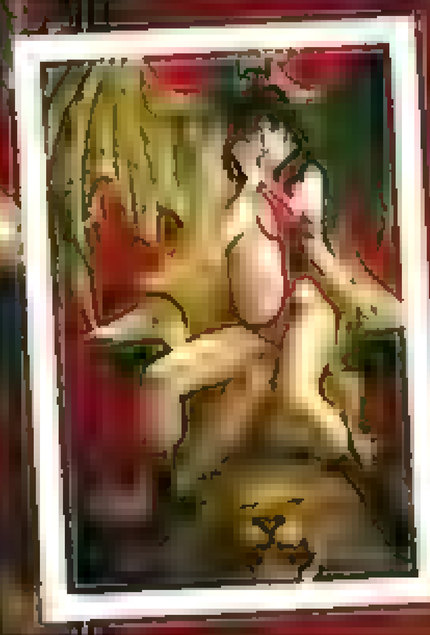
4 Reinforce details

The mask has been removed and I've simply enhanced several structure lines and details so they won't get lost when I lay in the semi-transparent base colour.



5 Paint wash

The skin tone is applied with a thin mixture of Unbleached Titanium White and a touch of Raw Sienna. By applying the paint as a wash you can lay down several coats until you get the value you want. Multiple coats also even out and remove streaks from the wash.

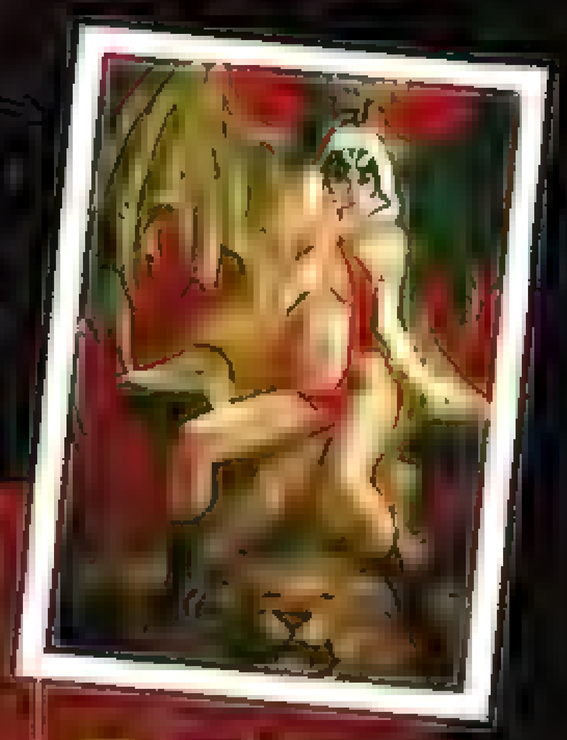


6 Colouring the skin

The skin tone is rendered using only two colours, Unbleached Titanium and Raw Umber, with a slight touch of Hookers Green Deep in the shadows. This is the base rendering with no highlighting, hence the semi-rough finish to the skin. The soft blends are achieved with the corner of a soft bristle brush. Her face is finished using Liquitex Soft White with a touch of Unbleached Titanium where needed. I apply the suit colour with Cadmium Red Deep and the boots with Mars Black.

7 Finishing the figure

The figure has been completed with all the colours mentioned previously. A light mix of Hookers Green Deep and Titanium White are used in the shadow areas of the figure to reflect surrounding colours and set her in the scene. There are light glazes of Hookers Green Deep on the shadow side of the figure and a more opaque mix is used for the highlights of her hair and boots. The green is used in the suit. The jewellery is Bronze Yellow and Hookers Green Deep. Highlights are Yellow Ochre, Cadmium Yellow Medium and Titanium White.



8 Apply varnish

The final painting measures 18x28cm. I varnish it now with several coats of Liquitex Gloss Varnish and it's done!



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Issue 90 Christmas 2012



In our Blizzard issue, the video game publishers give us the green light to show off new art from Alex Ross, Simon Bisley, Syd Mead, Alex Horley, Paul Bonner, Craig Mullins and other great artists. Sam Didier paints a Warcraft-StarCraft mash-up, and Laurel D Austin composes spiky alien characters

Issue 91 January 2013



In our Tolkien special we talk to artists John Howe and Alan Lee about making The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey, while workshops feature Gollum, Éowyn's battle with the Witch-king, and Corrado Vanelli's Middle-earth elf queen. Elsewhere, Donato Giancola shares his treasured techniques

Issue 92 February 2013



Combine 2D and 3D in your art, improve your backgrounds, mix up your fantasy genres master backlighting these are just some of the techniques that you can learn in this month's packed issue. We also talk to Adrian Smith and Edward Howard about their inspirational fantasy art

Issue 93 March 2013



In our sci-fi special, Admira Wijaya designs believable mechs, Serge Birault paints a Barbarella pin-up, Clint Cearley creates a mechanical wizard and Nick Harris tries to put goblins in space with SketchBook Pro. We also have an interview with delightfully eccentric artist Ian Miller

Issue 94 April 2013



Our workshop artists will give your anatomy skills a real boost this month. Cover artist David Gaillet, teacher Charles Hu and ex-Disney artist John Watkiss all endeavour to sharpen your figure drawing techniques. And Corrado Vanelli helps you depict better faces in Corel Painter

Issue 95 May 2013



Manga and mechs make up a large portion of this month's cracking issue. Our workshop section will give you the skills to compose manga fight scenes and heroic characters, and explain the secrets of manga's masking techniques. And we discover what it takes to paint the perfect mech

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Sketchbook

Pawel Zawislak

No matter your style, shape or attitude, it's a unique personality that counts in the pages of Pawel's sketchbook

SATAN
An old drawing from 2000 depicting Satan's life full of torture and suffering. Yeah, right. Can I die now and go to Hell?'

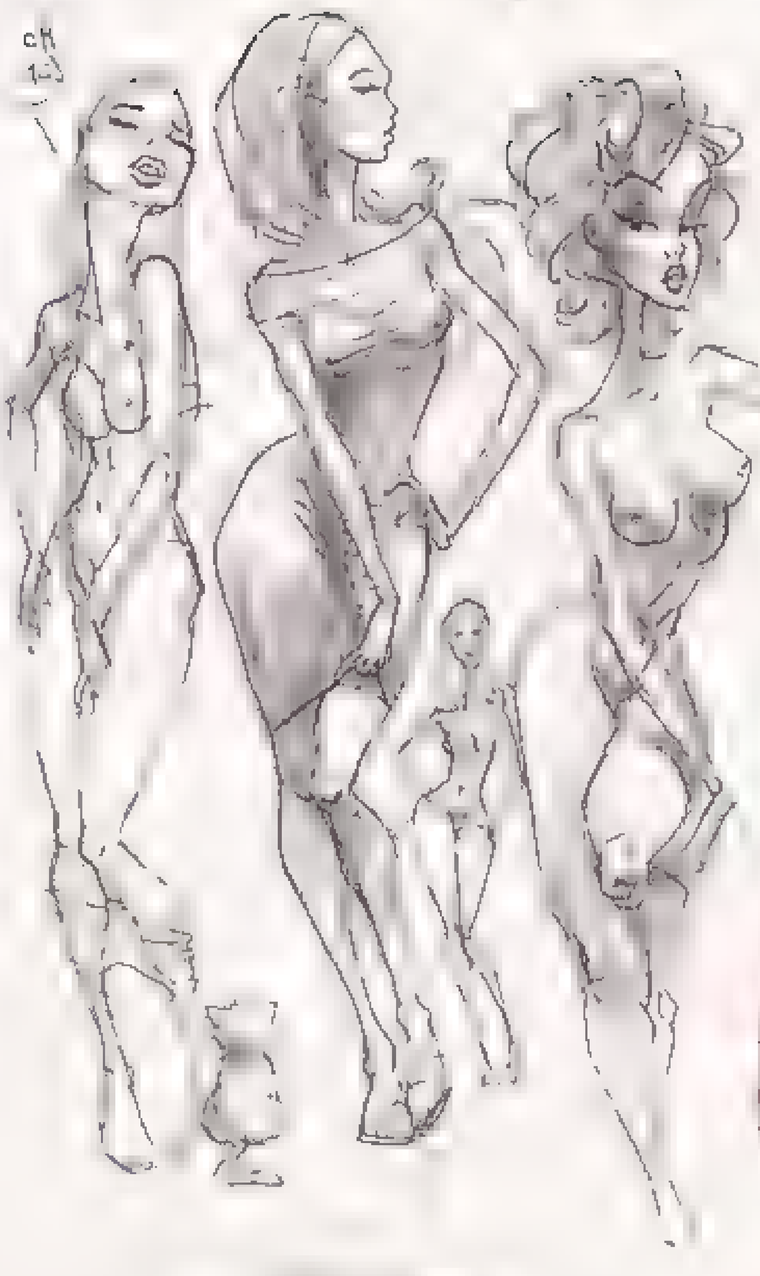
PROFILE

Pawel Zawislak
COUNTRY: Australia



Pawel is a Polish illustrator based in Sydney. Along with freelance work, he's spent the past few years creating storyboards and advertising visuals, with the ball point pen being his tool of choice. Pawel loves to create highly characterised art, and hopes for the chance to create character designs for a movie.
www.bit.ly/ifx-pzawislak



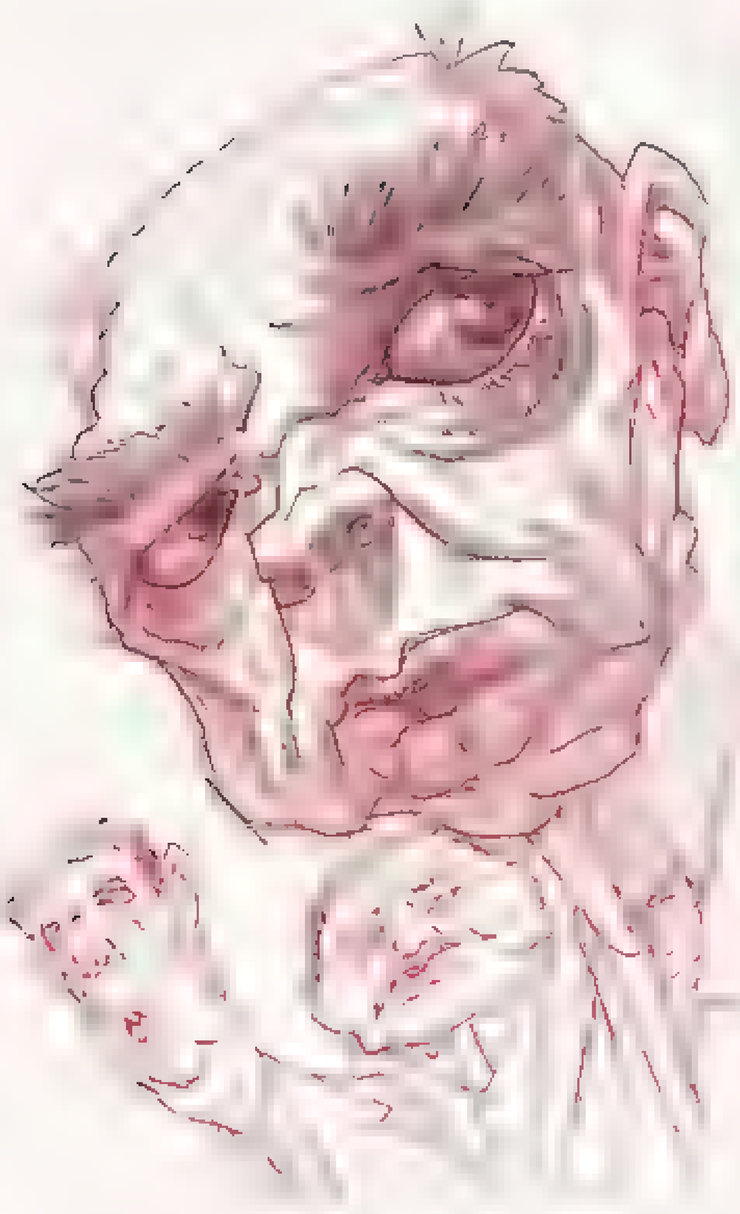




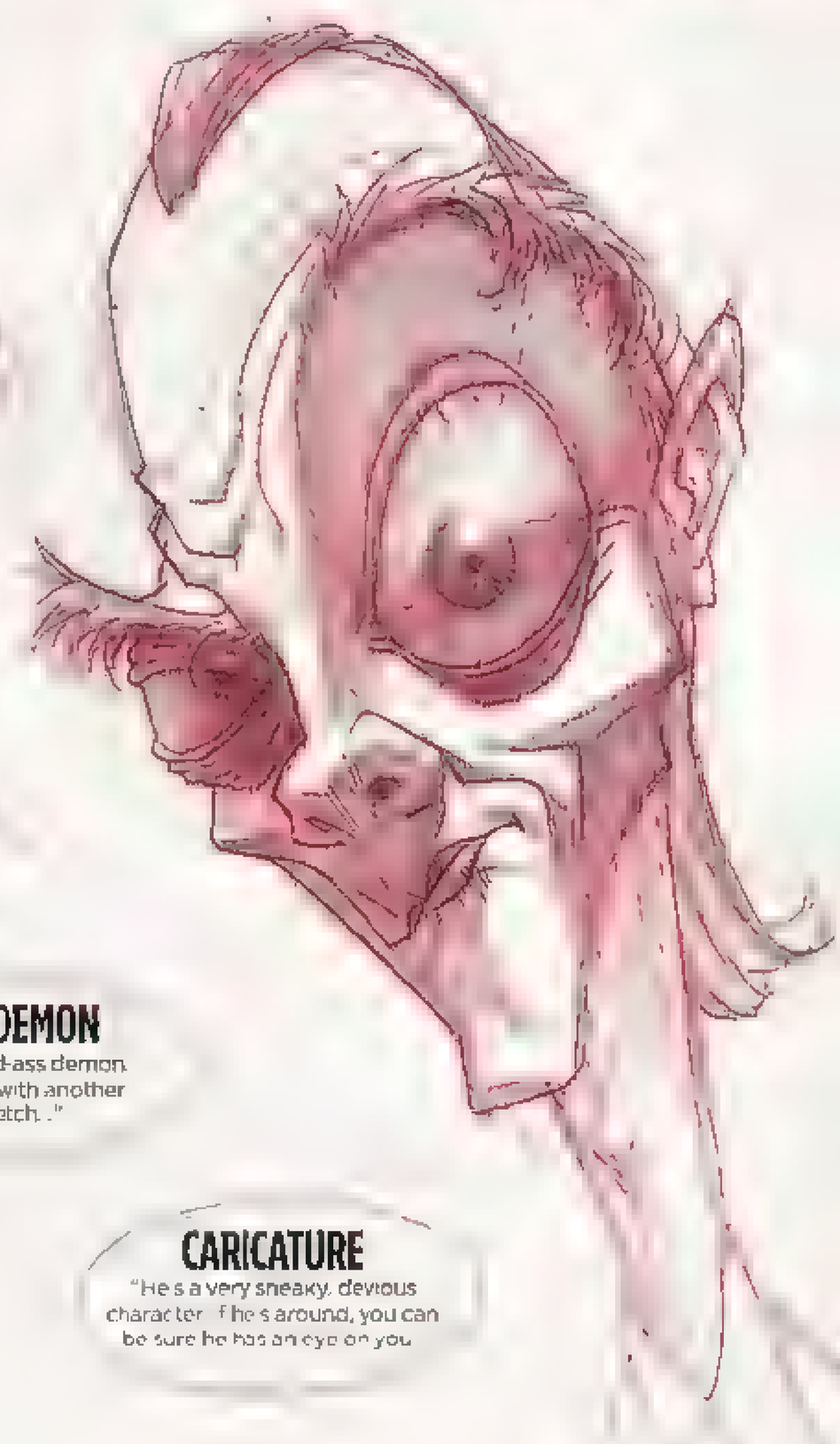
GIRLS

My goal was to come up with some extremely sexy juicy sultry girls. Those kinda girls some of us would die or kill for which makes each of them potentially a perfect femme fatale character"

"Just another day with another monster sketch..."







BAD ASS DEMON

"A quickie of a bad-ass demon. Just another day with another monster sketch..."

GRUMPY OLD MEN

"Even though it's just a sketch, I wanted to tell the whole story of this fella. He's one heck of a character."

CARICATURE

"He's a very sneaky, devious character. If he's around, you can be sure he has an eye on you."

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART
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Sketchbook

"Enormous cascades of wrinkled skin are far more interesting to explore on paper than the smoothest of skins"

OLD

"I've always been fascinated by old people's facial features. Enormous cascades of wrinkled skin are far more interesting to explore on paper than the smoothest of skins."

INTELLIGENT CREATURE

"I wanted to bring something more thoughtful and intelligent to this character. Something a bit different than mere creepiness."

I WANT YOU TO BECOME A STRAIGHT EDGE

"As a veteran of Straight Edge philosophy, I tend to draw lots of edge kids. This one's just a goofy character that just happened to be edge. I've a very big edge."

EXECUTOR

An old ballpoint pen drawing depicting a merciless executioner and his victim. It takes a while to do this kind of rendering, but it's the kind I really enjoy doing.



Want to share your sketches? Then drop us an email, with a selection of your artwork, to **sketchbook@imaginefx.com**, or upload your drawings at **www.imaginefx.com/sketchbook**.

STEAM AHEAD INTO CONCEPT ART

10 TIPS what it takes to be a concept artist, with tips from Steamboot's new touring workshop SB Explore

At some point all artists have doubts as to whether they're taking the shortest road to their desired career goal. Dreaming about creating concept art for AAA games and blockbuster films is all good and well, but nothing beats getting art insight from the professionals who work in these fields, to make sure you're heading in the right direction.

Some of the biggest digital concept art studios provide this through travelling workshops around the world. Bobby Chiu's Imaginism put together Schoolism LIVE in San Francisco this April, with three four hour workshops for a paying pubic.

Kekai Kotaki
www.kekaiart.com



Having started his career as a texture artist at ArenaNet Kekai went on to be its lead concept artist for Guild Wars 2

AJ Trahan
www.bit.ly/ifx-ajtrahan



Having worked in the industry on titles as Epic Mickey in 2010 and more recently Halo 4 AA

Sébastien Larroudé
www.sebastienlarroude.com



A co founder of Steambot, 'Rainart' has worked on TRON Legacy and Deus Ex Human Revolution, as well as releasing the Gnomon DVD From Speed Painting to Matte Painting

David Levy
www.vyle-art.com



Another co-founder of Steambot, 'Vyle' has since worked on Ridley Scott's Prometheus and with leading companies such as Pixar, EA and Sony

Nicolas Ferrand
www.redwhirlpool.com



Another Steambot artist VFX has worked with Ubisoft on Assassin's Creed 2 and Far Cry 2 and was a sosenior concept artist on Roland Emmerich's Singularity



MULTI-LAYERED WORK
Kekai Kotaki worked on several layers smultaneously to achieve the dynamic battle painting above. He says it makes individual elements stronger

ConceptArt.org has long travelled the globe with its explosive digital art workshops, from Seattle in 2009 to London this year The most recent is Steambot studios, which launches SB Explore this May

The artists at Steambot have galvanised their tanks with superstar talent from further afield to deliver a four day masterclass. In it they cover what it takes to create professional concept art, using examples from the artists' own portfolios, from projects like Guild Wars to Ridley

> The general aim is to get everything on its own, so you can better work on it







'Good artists borrow, great artists steal,' the legendary Pablo Picasso is thought to have said

>> Scott's film Prometheus. Steambot artists and art directors, including Sebastien Larroudé (Rainart), Manny Carrasco (MANu), and Joel Dos Reis Viegas (FEERIK), have invited Halo's Sparth, Massive Black's Coro and Guild Wars' Kekai Kotaki, among a raft of others, to take 16 classes each day in the musical city of New Orleans, US.

"The focus of the workshop is concept art, visual storytelling and creating original intellectual property," says executive producer Kristy Tipton. "The idea behind SB Explore workshops is to travel with students to a different location each year and experience different cultures and lore as a way to spark ideas."

This year they take the 'dark side' of New Orleans as a springboard, "as it's an historic city known for ghosts, pirates, vampires and voodoo," Kristy adds.

We caught up with some of the featuring artists before this year's SB Explore event, and asked them to give us a couple of their top tips on how they go about painting their concept art.

Using everything from a camera phone snap to an original piece of film concept art, and colouring your mood to 'stealing' ideas, here are their unique examples on how to create great concept art.





10 STEAMBOAT TIPS

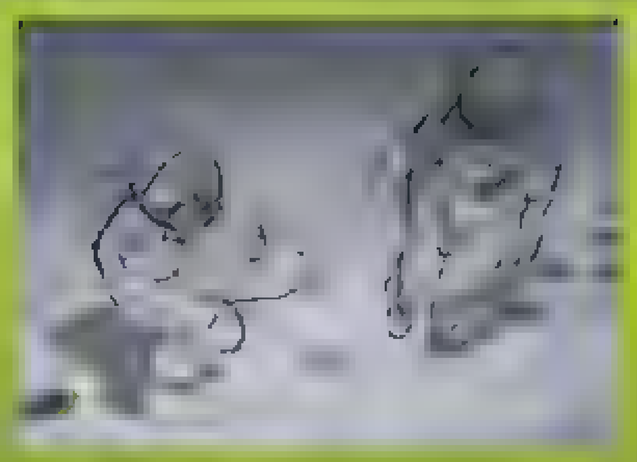




FEEL YOUR WAY

David explains why he adjusts the values and contrasts of his images

7



VIEW POINT

Try to find an angle that is original and has depth, says David. Fresh framing will make your image unique

8

hog and f ve
a ve t that extra
ne of the e



ARTIST TIP

One of the most important things I do before judging a piece to be final is to turn it black and white. It enables me to see if the values are correct. If they're not, I readjust the values, contrasts and colours until I'm happy with them. Another way to achieve this is to check these values in the Channels panel.



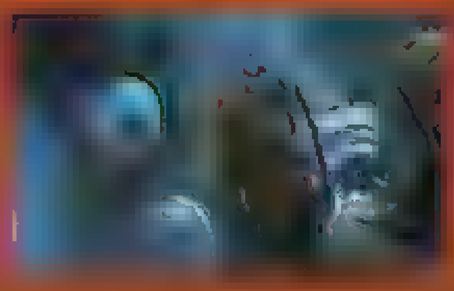
GO NUTS

Structure will take you only so far, Nicolas tells us



10

Define the mood of your piece with the Curves tool in Photoshop. Then try different colour settings, bringing it from warm to cold. Play with the colour of highlights and shadows separately. Think of them as distinct and you'll have more control over the feel of the piece.



Then add some life into it with some crazy idea and design, always with the aim of telling a little story. For this piece the little jellyfish pilot in the foreground was added at the end. Try experimenting with incorporating the use of 3D into your workflow, and see how you can develop your way of creating new artwork.



EXTRA DIMENSION

Nicolas explains how he integrates 3D elements into his concept work

9

I create a 3D rough of my scene to define the composition. Then I try different rendering passes to get alpha channels – black and white channels, to get a mask, then a selection in Photoshop. Working on one element at a time speeds up the process.

I then work the background and the vehicle separately to have a more precise rendering. Also doing a lighting render pass can be useful to add realism. When you're working with 3D like this, the client can approve the shot very quickly, as you can offer different camera views for them.

Development sheet

PROJECT TITLE: WAR ZONE BIOME

This environment concept is for a massive multiplayer online game produced by Tencent Boston. The goal is to create an area vast enough for a battle to take place in, along with plenty of interesting visual elements

PROFILE

Chris Anderson
Country: US

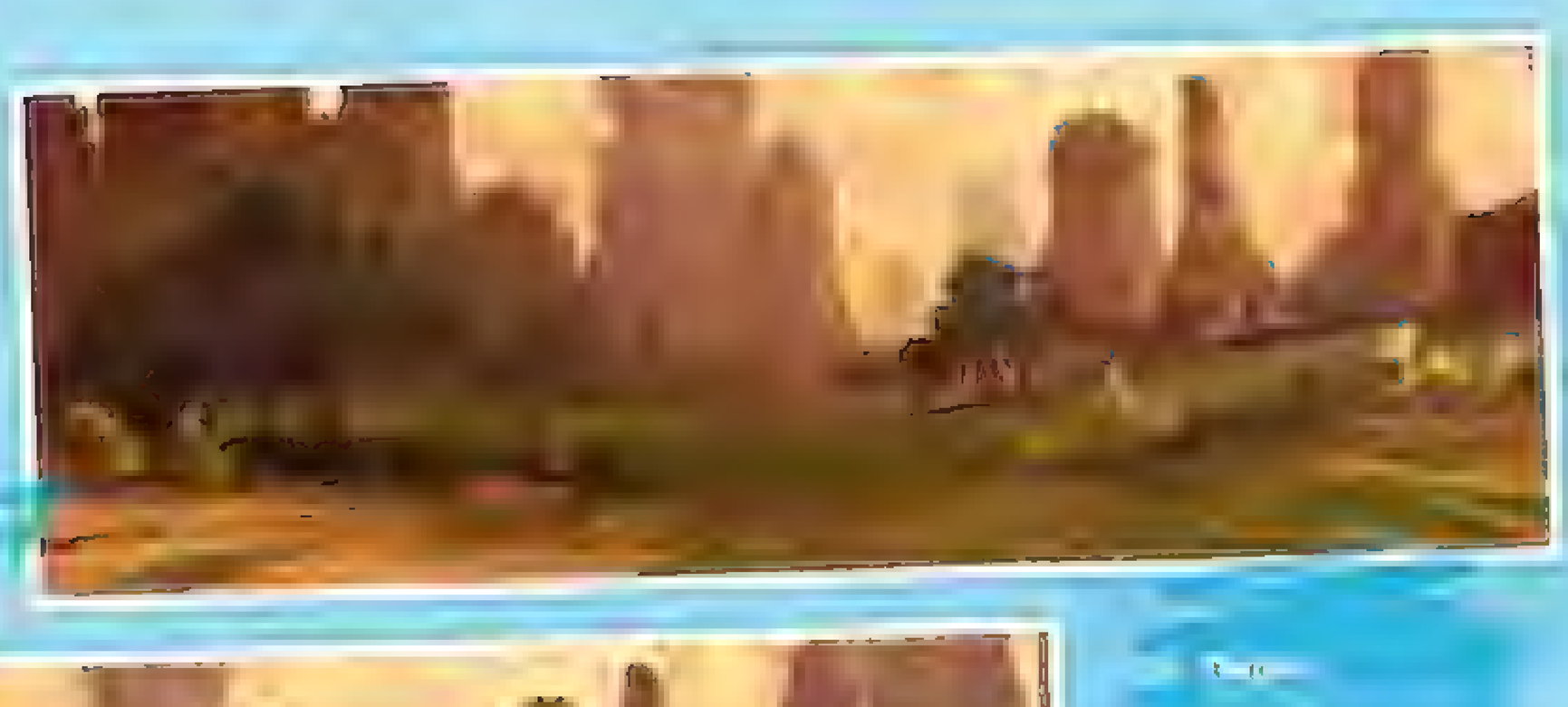


Chris is a senior concept artist who works full time for EA BioWare in Austin, Texas. He's able to turn his hand to character, vehicle and environment art. In his spare time he produces as much art as he does at work, splitting his time between freelance and personal projects.
www.chrisjanderson.com

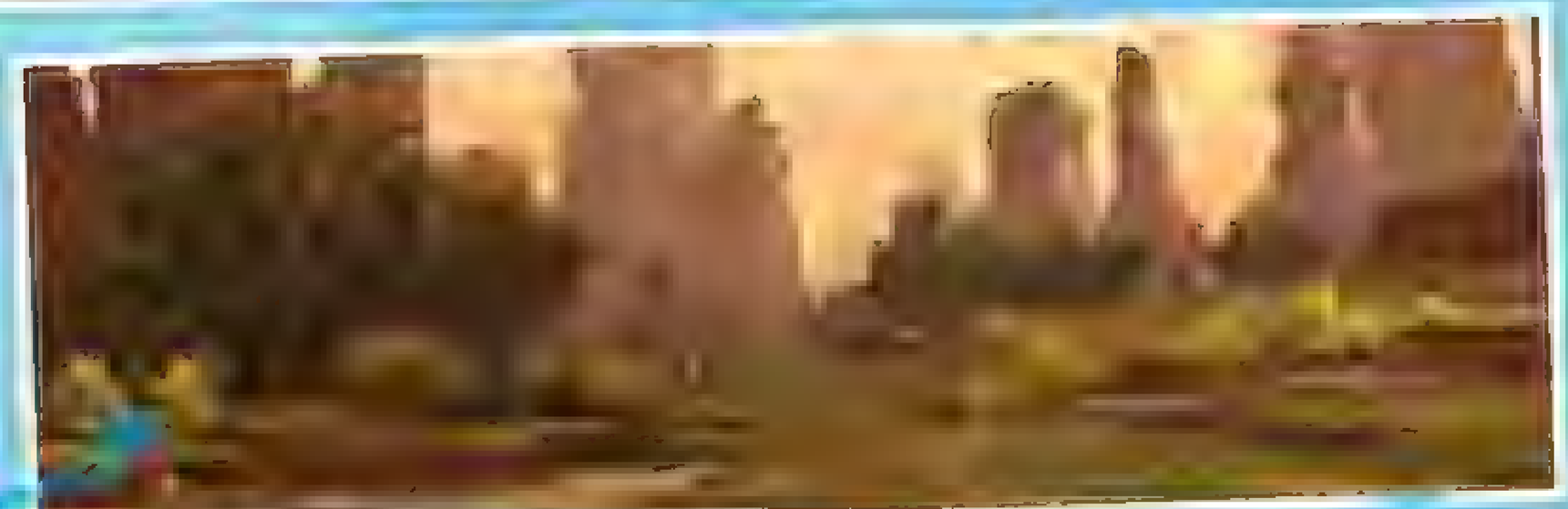














SEND US YOUR CONCEPTS!

Are you working on a project, or doodling your own development sketches that you'd like to share with us?

LET US KNOW! Email your WIPs and final images to: develop@imaginefx.com

ArtPose *Traditional*

Christiane Vleugels
Belgium
www.ralpun.deviantart.com
christiane.vleugels@telenet.be
Oil and acrylics



With having a natural affinity for the arts, it was no surprise that Christiane found herself working as a professional artist after years of devoted study, a though things didn't beg n as expected.

"At first, I was forced to take on numerous commissions, with many of them being reproductions. Looking back, I realise they were a necessary part of my artistic journey. I owe my various skills to that endless l st of commissions."

Then Christ ane broke free and took her own ideas to the canvas. "With each original work I create, I realise that the true learning process has only just begun for me."

IMAGINEFX CRIT



"To me, the true beauty of Christiane's work is the way that her adoration for the models flows straight into these paintings. These are portraits crafted with love, where every brush stroke reflects a heartfelt sentiment."
Nicola Henderson
Staff Write



MEDUSA
Mixed media, 110x130cm
"A portrait of my beautiful stepdaughter, Zoë. She has posed for many of my paintings, so I guess you can say she is my muse. Her ability to pose like a chameleon always surprises me with the diversity of her looks!"

ALLURE
Mixed media, 90x120cm
"This is a portrait of the lovely Hollywood icon, Louise Brooks. I especially love painting these vintage portraits because they reveal the beauty of a long-gone genre. Especially the sentiment that one feels looking at old glory!"

HOPE
Mixed media, 100x14...
"This is a portrait of my youngest daughter, Marilyn. I never get tired of painting her dreamy looks that bring out this romantic feeling."



Raoul Vitale Canton

US

www.raoulvitaleart.com

rvitale55@sbcglobal.net

Oils



"My paintings have always had some element of fantasy, even before I knew what fantasy art was," Raoul tells us, which is rather fitting considering he has created art for clients including Magic: The Gathering in the past. "I've also had opportunities to illustrate children's books and magazines, with many private commissions along the way."

Building a career out of hard work and determination, Raoul's art harks back to a childhood love for mythology and magic, with 19th century art and Golden Age illustration forming his biggest influences. "Even as a child, light and shadow and the moods they create have had a profound effect on me. I constantly strive to capture those moods, and maybe one day I'll succeed!"



Oils on masonite, 13x19in

"I went to a small wildlife exhibit at the Canton Art Museum. There were some fine examples, including John Seery Lester among many others. When I got home, I thought, "I should do a wildlife piece." But somehow mine went horribly wrong. There was a dragon in it!"

SCOUTS

Oils on masonite, 36x24in

This private commission was unusual because the client wanted to see three women, a dragon, and a dog. He had commissioned 25 illustrators to paint the same scene. He's putting together stories inspired by each painting and the project will culminate in a book – not to mention a staggering collection of art all based on one theme."

SWORD AND ROSE

Oils on masonite, 16.5x21.5in

"This is a personal piece created back in 2007, which was sold to a collector at GluXCon in 2008. I unintentionally used a very restricted palette of burnt sienna, prussian blue and white. I always paint the far distance and work my way to the foreground. It's the only thing I do consistently in painting."

TORIN'S QUEST

Oils on masonite, 26x16in

"This was for a private collector, who wanted some elvish women riding griffons. Since then, I've had the honour of having this piece showcased at the At the Edge: Art of the Fantastic exhibition at the Allentown Art Museum."





IMAGINEFX CRIT



"The use of dark tonal colours in the foreground and light pastel colours in the background enforces the sense of depth in Raoul's Sword and Rose. His attention to detail and texture is awe-inspiring, and the use of mist really sets the atmosphere of the painting"

Daniel Vincent
Art Editor

SEND US YOUR ARTWORK!

Want to see your traditional art grace these very pages? Send your work to us, along with an explanation of your techniques, the title of each piece, a photo of yourself and your contact details. Images should be sent as 300dpi TIFF or JPEG files, on CD or DVD. All artwork is submitted on the basis of a non-exclusive worldwide licence to publish, both in print and electronically.

You can also email submissions for FXPosé. Bear in mind that files must be no more than 5MB in total, or we won't receive them.
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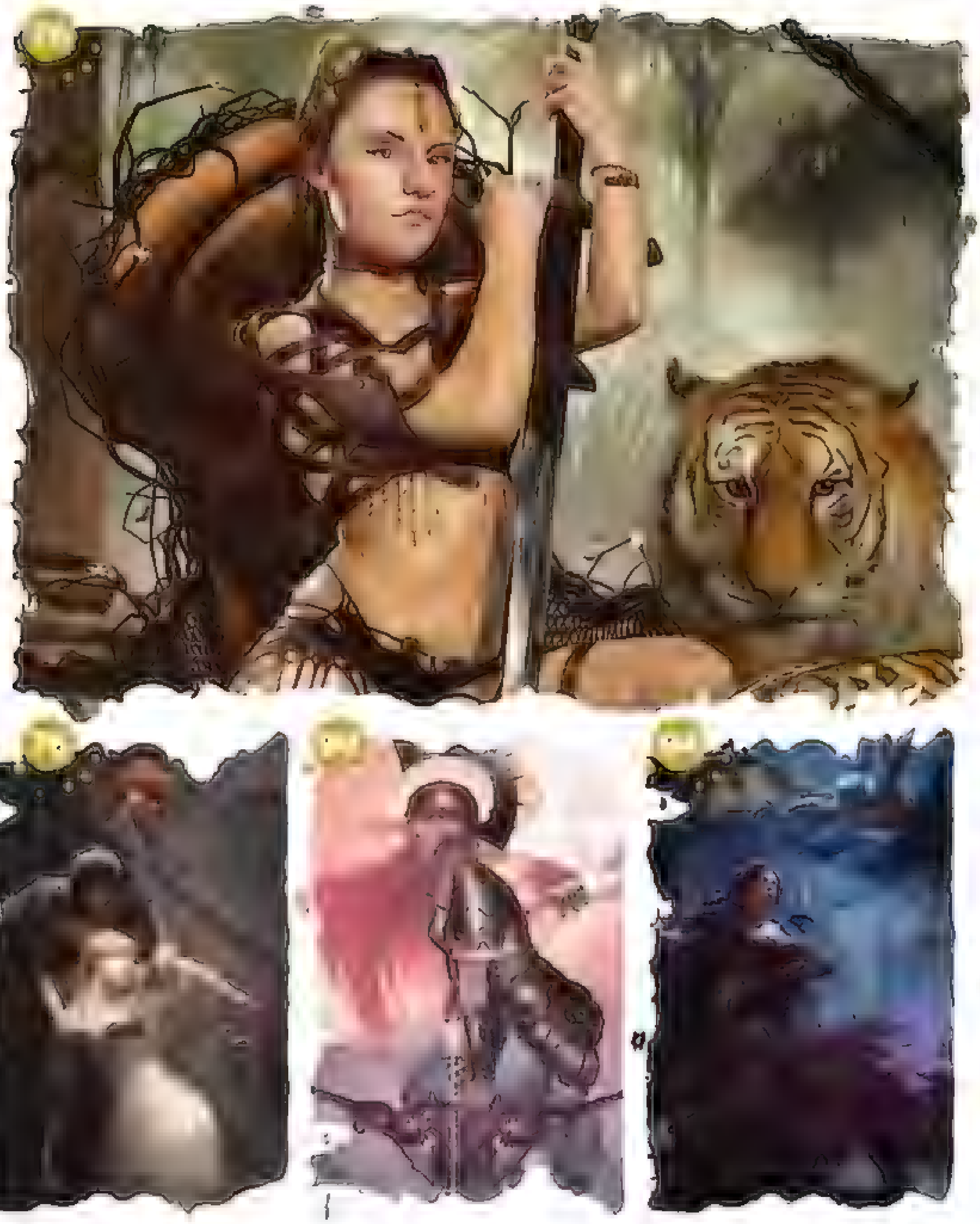
FANTASY SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

ImagineFX Workshops

29 PAGES OF TUITION

Video workshops on your digital edition...
If you see this 'Watch This' button, click the link (or write it down) to view the video that accompanies a workshop

Advice from the world's best artists



This Issue

Adapt Frazetta's art techniques
John Stanko shows how to apply the art legend's tricks to create dynamism.

Balance details in a composition
Liam Peters reveals how he adds realism to fantasy.

Give your art a traditional feel
Olly Lawson digitally paints a traditional style figure illustration.

Flowing and chaotic compositions
Kelley Harris shows how to lead the viewer's eye across a painting and tell a story

Bring a magical forest to life
Donglu Yu experiments with natural textures.

Take inspiration from history
Paint a person influenced by the past, with Clint Cearley.

Getting to know Procreate
Paul Tysall explains why less is more with this art app.

Learn to paint fabric in motion
Anna Steinbauer reveals her technique for painting cloth on a moving character.

Painter

ADAPT FRAZETTA'S ART TECHNIQUES

John Stanko demonstrates how applying the compositional techniques that Frank Frazetta used will make a simple figure pose look dynamic

Anyone who's ever dreamed of painting fantasy or sci-fi art for a living has probably spent hours studying the work of Frank Frazetta. He was a true pioneer in our industry, and his style is instantly recognisable. I can remember painstakingly trying to mimic his art when I was a teenager. I quickly learned that becoming another Frazetta is a fool's errand; there is only one Frazetta. The work is so well known, his approach and what makes the work special, then try to incorporate that into your own style.

A lot of the genius of his work is the use of the figure's pose as a compositional element. At first glance, his art appears to be a simple triangle composition, but upon further examination, they're much more complex. The angle of an arm or the tilt of the head all help to create dynamic images. For this tutorial, my composition was inspired by Frazetta's Conan the Destroyer book cover illustration.

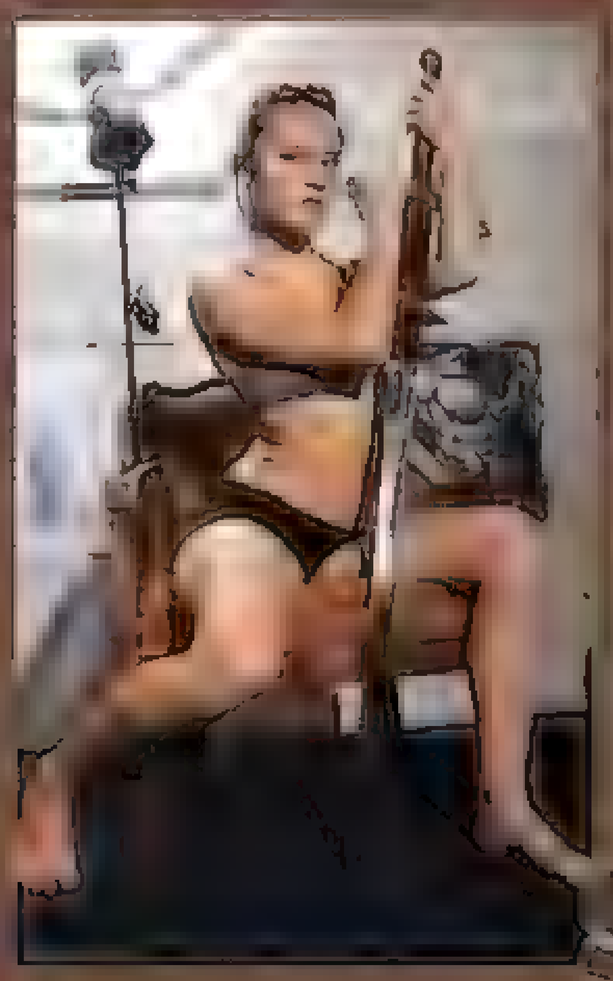
Since I'm a traditionally trained artist, I prefer to use Corel Painter as my digital art. Painter enables me to use many of the same techniques that I use when I paint with oils. For example, I can create a look that's difficult to achieve in other programs. Painter's similarity to traditional medium made it fairly easy for me to learn the software.

Artist PROFILE



1 Obtain references

The ultimate success or failure of a painting is often based on the choices you make before you even begin to paint. For example, having the right reference can make all the difference. It's not uncommon for me to shoot hundreds of reference for a single painting. For this image, I shot almost 900 reference photos. It's rare that a single photo will be perfect and I'll often have to 'Frankenstein' images together to achieve the desired look.



2 Strengthen your composition

Working through your composition during the sketch/drawing phase is critically important. Using a tool such as a Fibonacci or golden spiral can help to fine-tune elements in your scene. Notice how many elements fall along the guidelines of the spiral. That said, don't be a slave to the spiral. It should only be used as a tool, not a crutch.



3 Introduce contrast

Another important aspect of composition is to create character with contrasting motions. For example, the tiger faces the left, while the character faces right. Also notice that the sword is slightly angled to the right, while the torso has a slight angle to the left. This creates a V-shape. Then notice the upside-down V-shape that the figure forms. The two overlapping V-shapes form a diamond, which leads the eye to the tiger, which draws the viewer into this key focal point.



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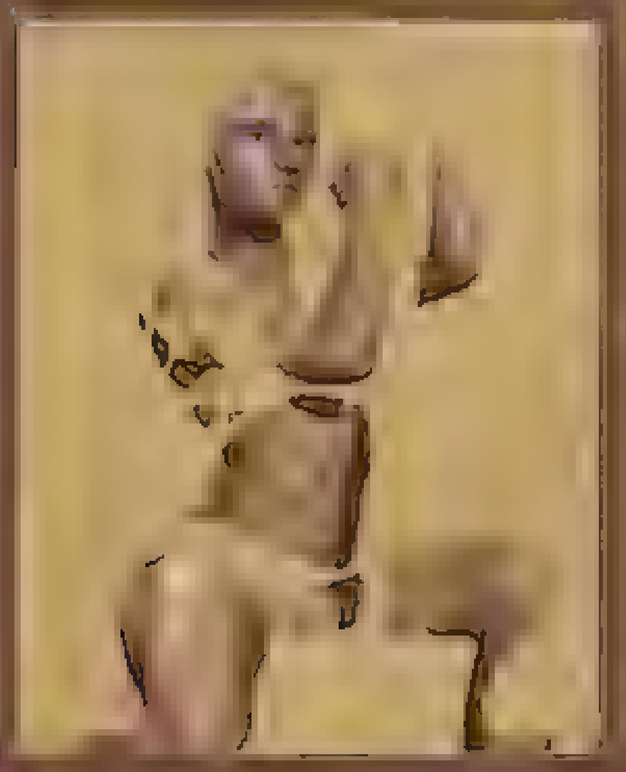


4 Underpainting stage

My first painting step is to tint the entire canvas so that it's not white, followed by adding a flood of colour over the main character. In Painter, if you select 'Pick up underlying color' from the Layers window, it'll add a bit of the colour from the layer underneath to the paint you're applying. I've found this helps to add a lot of richness to the skin tones.

5 Don't forget the character's hands

I continue to block in the body, paying extra attention to the hands. The only thing more important than good hands in a painting are good faces.

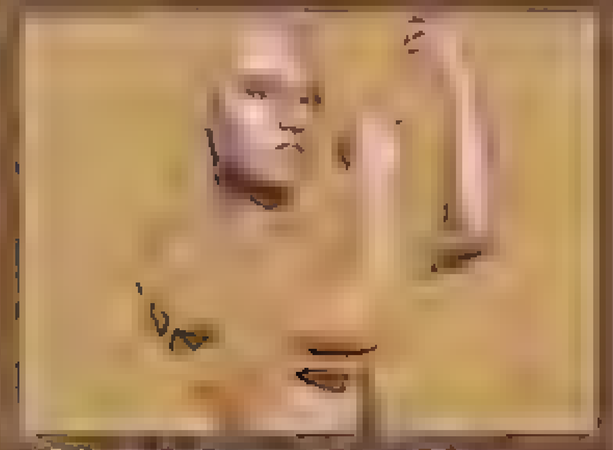




6 Tackle the larger shapes

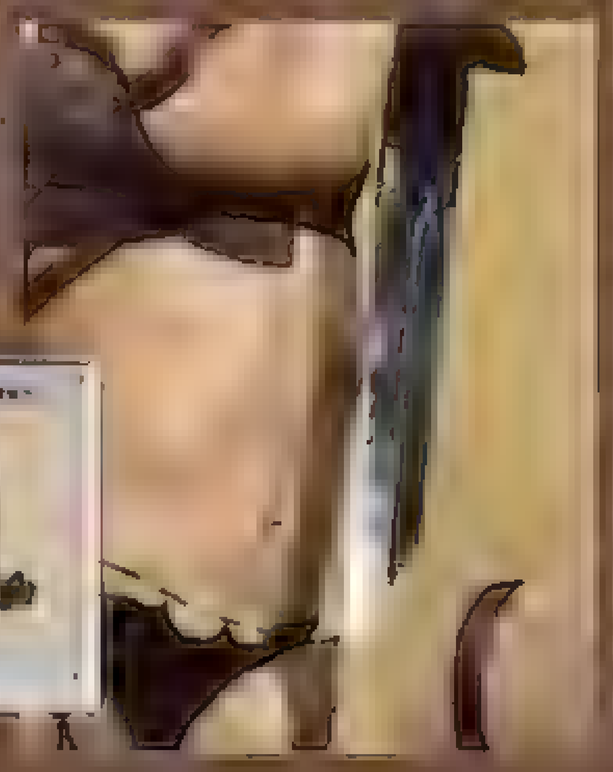
To begin painting the face, I start by blocking in the larger shapes. During this phase, I use the Wet Oil brush with 100 per cent Opacity. I try to always use 100 per cent Opacity when I lay down colour, especially in the early stages, to avoid my colours becoming too muddy or the edges too soft.

PRO SECRETS



7 Brighten the skin

Take a step back from painting and notice that the skin tones are a tad too dark. To lighten them, simply duplicate the layer, then add a Screen to the new layer.



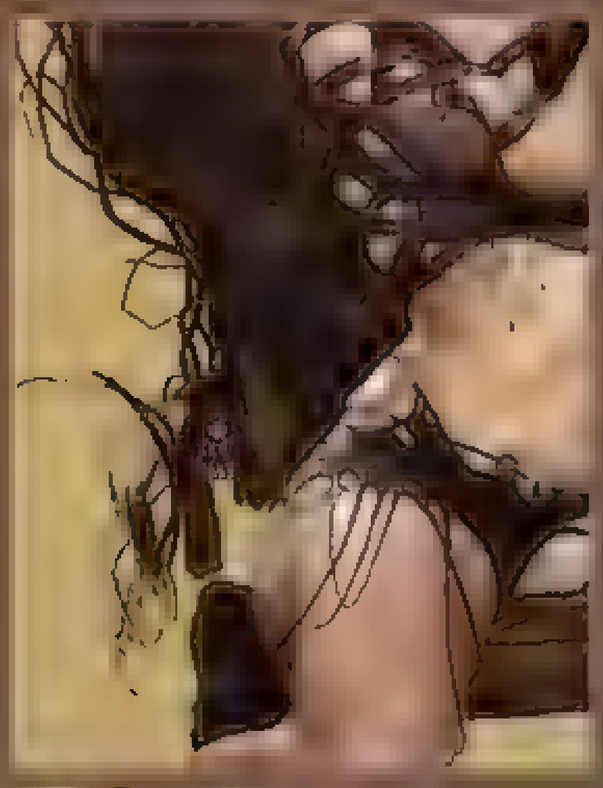


8 Take care with leather

When painting leather armour, be careful not to let it become too monochromatic, or merely use tints of the colour wheel. For this character's leather armour, I use a warm brown for the middle tones and shadows, but in the highlights I use a cooler tone.

9 Depict metal

When painting a metal object you need to be clear on the type of metal and how shiny it needs to be. For this sword, I want it to be highly polished and reflective, which means I need to create lots of contrast between the highlights and the shadows.

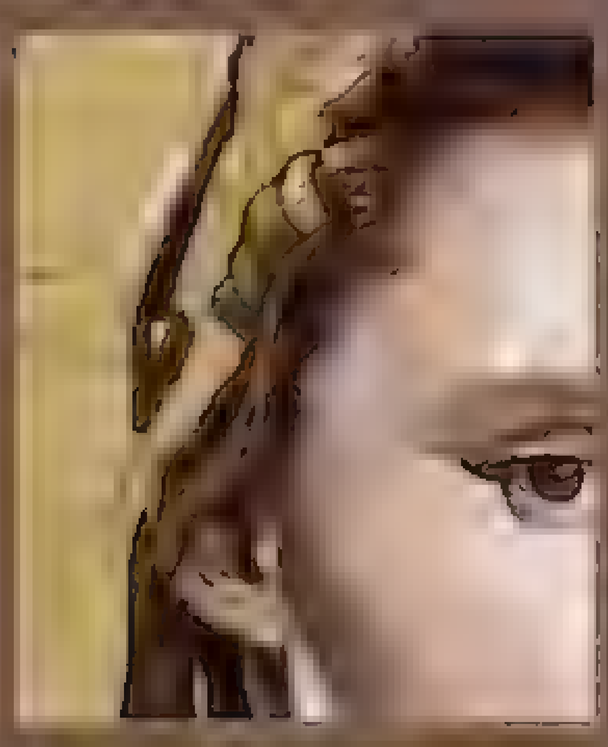


Detailing the throne

For the throne that my character is sitting on, I add vines, flowers and leaves to give the appearance that it's alive and part of the jungle.

Less is more

When painting hair, start with the larger shapes and slowly work into details. As a general rule, never paint the individual strands of hair, which is a time-consuming exercise that rarely produces decent results. Instead, concentrate on the highlights and shadows.

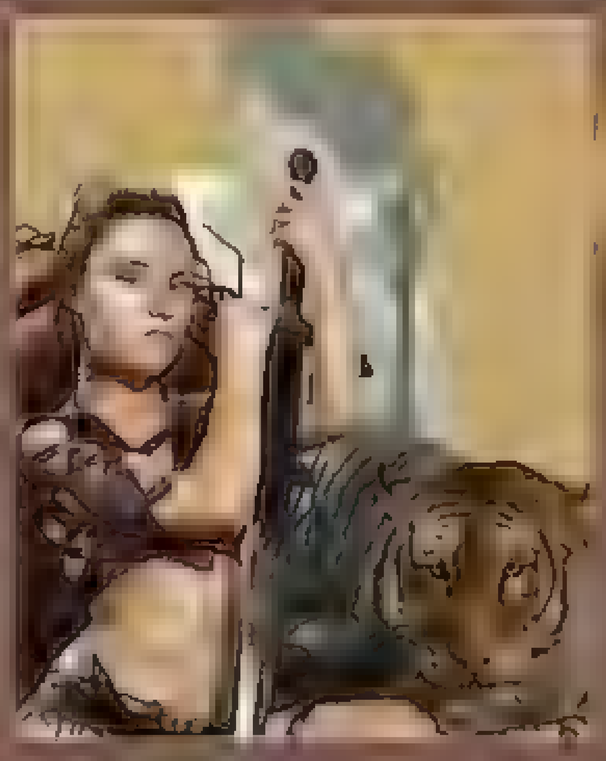


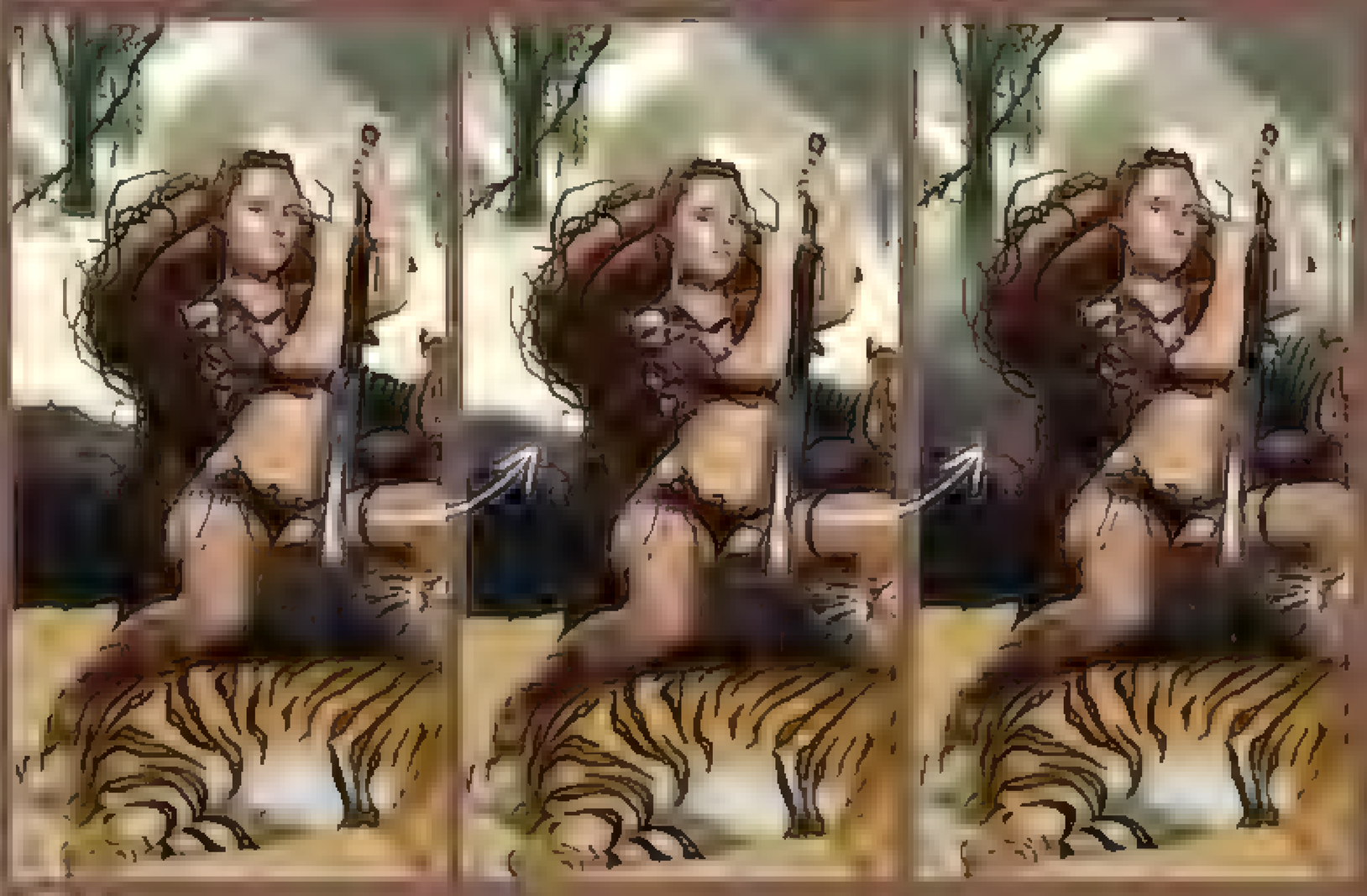
Tiger, tiger, burning bright

I've found that, when painting animals such as the tigers in this image, it's [illegible] by referring to beasts found in nature.

Background techniques

Try to avoid adding either too many details or an extensive range of colours into your backgrounds. When painting digitally, it's tempting to zoom in really close and add a great amount of detail, but there is no need to paint in every leaf or branch on a tree. An excess amount of detail will take attention away from the foreground, where your primary focal points are more likely to be. It's more important to create strong and accurate silhouette forms than it is to have large amounts of detail. When in doubt, remember that simple is always better when trying to create depth.





Manage your values

Make sure there's a significant difference in the values of the main character and [illegible] issues, meaning that the eye has a difficult time separating the character from the background. On a piece with many details, like this one, I layer paint [illegible] the desired level so that the character in your painting pops off the page.

PRO SECRETS





Finishing the piece

Once you've blocked in your entire painting, one of the most important phases is adding the finish. I use a Grainy Blender from the Artist Oils [illegible] when my edges. However, be careful not to overblend, because the image will look lifeless and plastic.



Photoshop

BALANCE DETAILS IN A COMPOSITION

Liam Peters reveals how he paints a realistic-looking fantasy scene without confusing the viewer by introducing too much detail

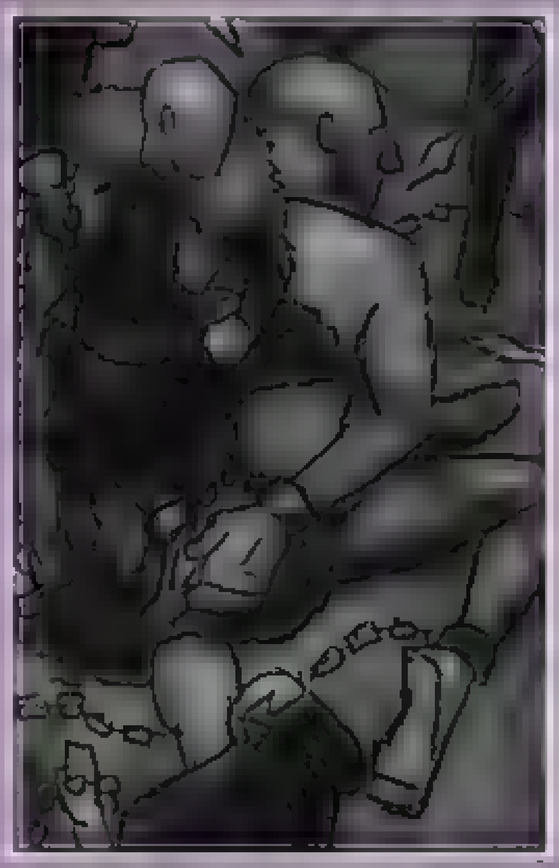


Whenever I start a personal piece I always see it as an opportunity to take the time to push my artistic abilities and improve. I try to incorporate things that are challenging or that I've never done before, and this painting Mercenaries - was no exception

In the beginning the only idea I had was a smaller character overpowering a larger one, and it had to be gritty and realistic. I find it easier to paint a black and white version first, to gain a good grasp of the composition, lighting, and then I move on to the colour stage. After that it's a matter of working out the details. My style leans more towards realism and trying to render mud, water and dirty skin realistically can be very difficult. In addition, concentrating too much on the details can be fatal to the rest of the image.

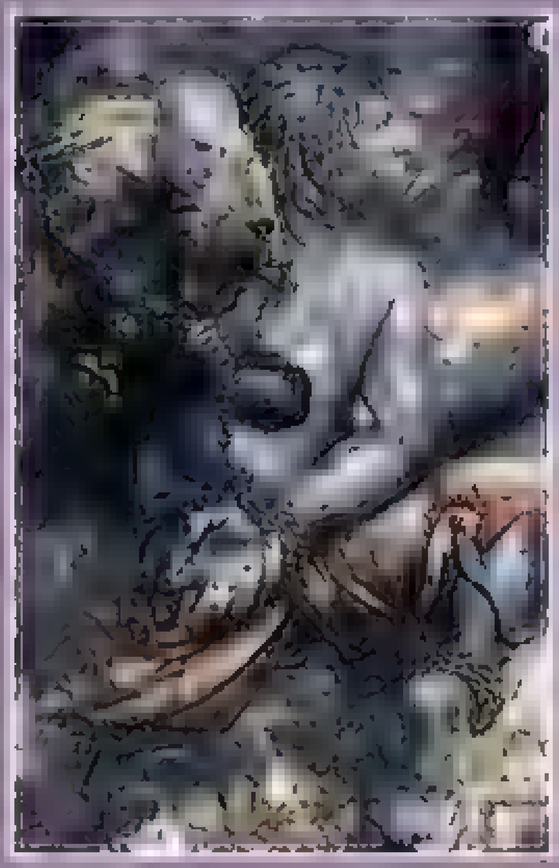
When I'm initially done, I realise my finished image is crowded with too much unnecessary detail and not enough contrast, leaving my characters lost in the background. Online feedback is extremely helpful and guides me through a second version in which I repaint the background and adjust the lighting to give more focus and form back to my main subjects. Never be afraid to listen to advice!

How to paint a giant focal point



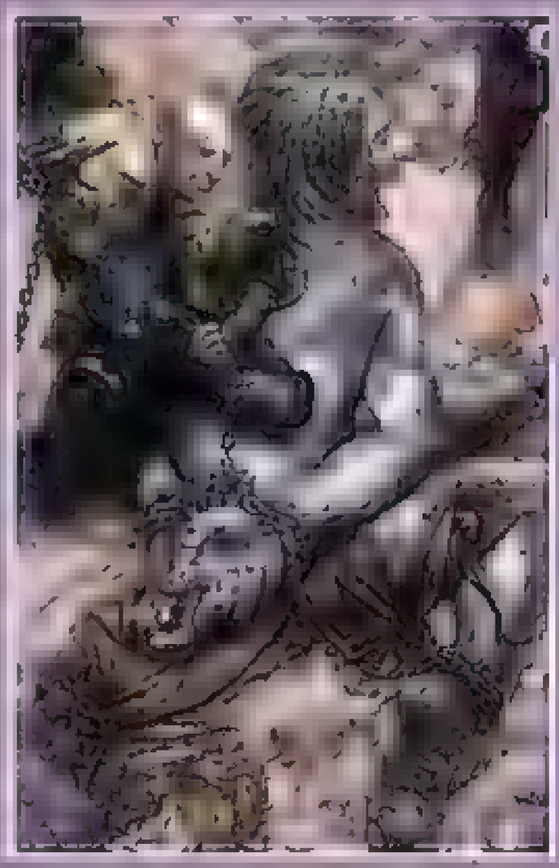
1 Refine the idea

My initial sketch has tree branch an extra mercenary at the bottom carrying chains. These elements feel like they're clogging up the composition, so to simplify things I cut them out to make the main



2 Too much detail

Despite the rays of light shining through the ima characters' shapes, contrast to make the subjects stand out and ultimately they ended up blending in with the sea of details on the ground. The image also feels flat



3 Listen to feedback

After some feedback I switch the lighting to midday. To simplify the background I paint large puddles of muddy water to make the arena-cover a little less overpowering, which creates some nice colour contrast with the main characters. This helps the viewer focus on the giant a lot more than before

WORKSHOP BRUSHES



GIVE YOUR ART A TRADITIONAL FEEL

Painting a traditional style figure illustration digitally can be a challenging exercise. Luckily, [illegible] is on hand to explain how it's done...

I [illegible] much that the modern artist can learn from contemporary, and highly recommend any budding artists to open [illegible] influenced by [illegible].

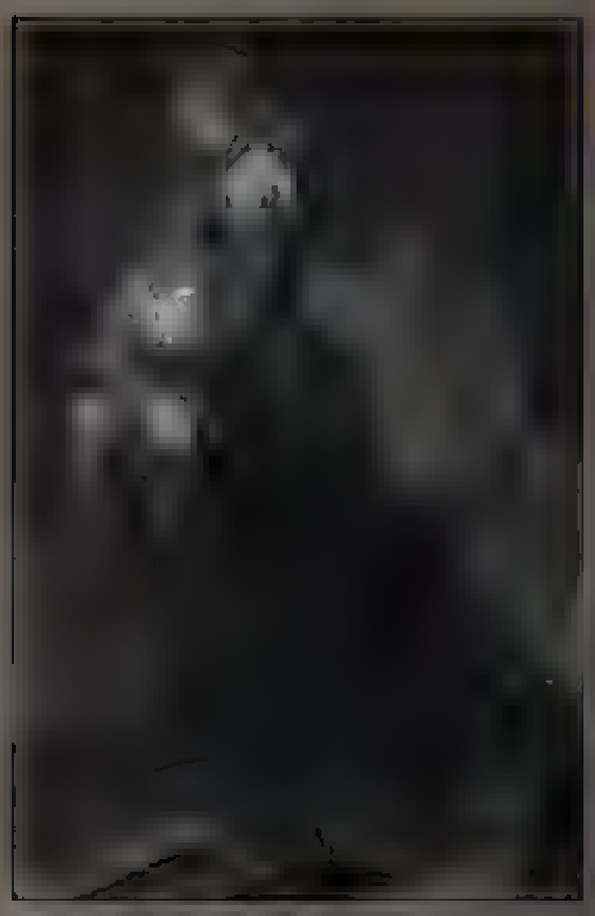
My main inspiration for this piece was a painting by Paul Delaroche in the National Gallery, London, entitled

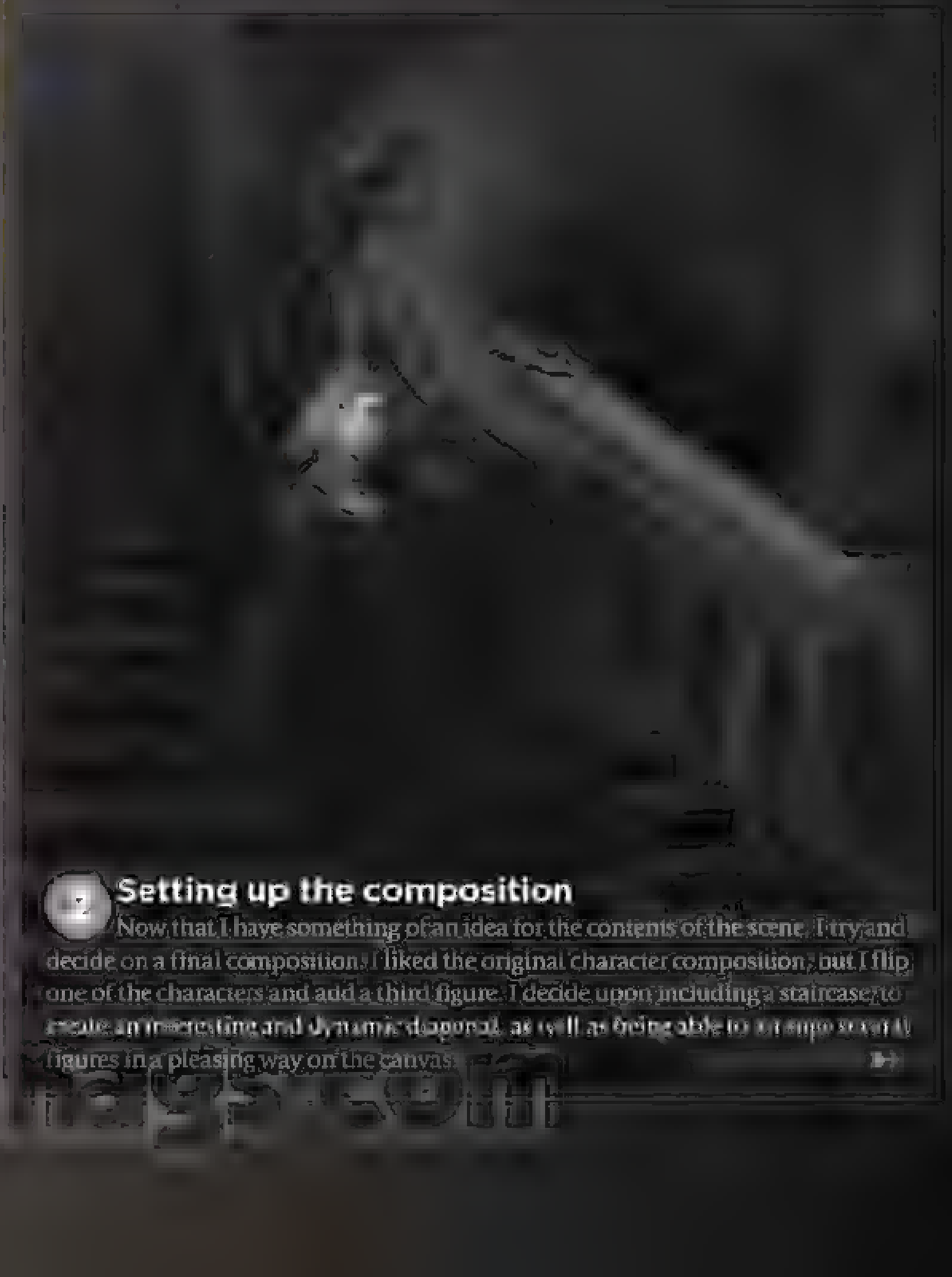
a story with this piece without being either too allegorical or figurative. I decided to paint a Cinderella-style girl poisoned by her evil stepsister.

I use Photoshop for all my painting, and this workshop is no exception. However, I don't believe that learning a traditional look requires tools that are specific to a particular piece of software – it's all about the approach, especially handling suggestion and controlling edges.

Suggestion is the idea of painting simplified marks that are hints at elements and features without going into distracting detail. Often the viewer's mind will fill in the blanks better than the artist ever could. This is best kept for non-focal points and will have the added bonus of leading the viewer's eyes to the more detailed focal points.

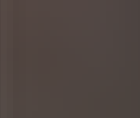
Edges are the boundaries of value or colour and can vary from soft to sharp and from 'lost' to 'found' respectively, and will influence the composition. Too many lost edges and the scene will be too blurry; the opposite results in a noisy image. But a combination will lead the eye and better describe form and textures.





Artist PROFILE

COUNTRY: England



a self-taught

illustrator

based in

from DC, Warner Bros,

PRO SECRETS

1 Start sketching

I like to do every step of my process digitally. Sometimes I'll use pencils for the first sketches, but I usually find myself looser when it comes to digital. It can also be more serendipitous, which is nice for an open-ended brief where the client doesn't have specific demands. I like to start the process by laying down random shapes and textures, and playing around until I start to see something worthy of painting to a finished state.

2 Setting up the composition

Now that I have something of an idea for the contents of the scene, I try and decide on a final composition. I liked the original character composition, but I flip one of the characters and add a third figure. I decide upon including a staircase to create an interesting and dynamic diagonal, as well as being able to arrange the figures in a pleasing way on the canvas.

In depth: A traditional feel

3 Shot through the heart

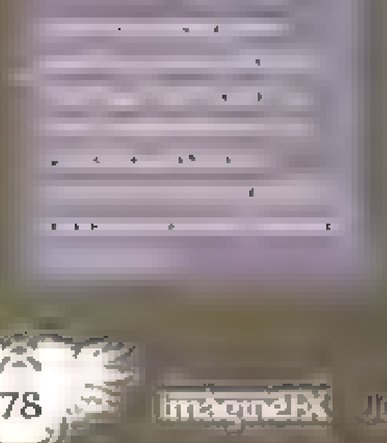
I decide to start adding story-telling elements. Originally, I had conceived the scene as a wraith dragging a dead girl up the staircase, but soon realise that would mean redrawing them all in worse poses. My solution is to introduce some drama by adding a new figure, and place an arrow shaft in her chest as to indicate that she's just died. I also start to loosely block the light and shadow shapes using grey tones.



4 Greying out

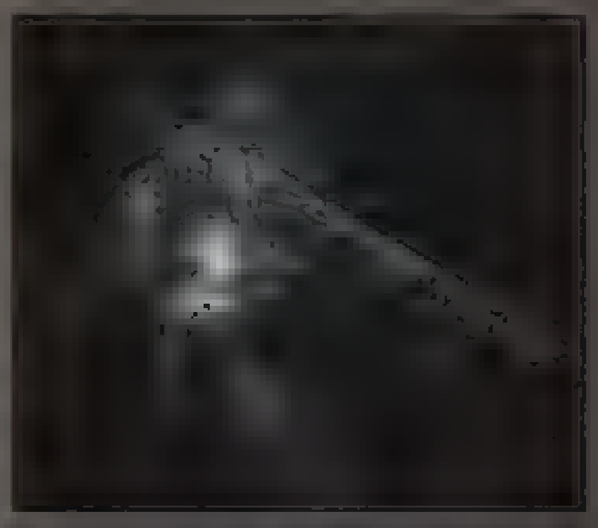
I add a flat grey layer on Multiply at 50% Opacity and merge it down to start a new line art layer above. This enables me to develop refined lines without totally removing the original gestural lines, and to get rid of some of the early and very strong values. I develop the drapery a bit more, and throw in a dribbling poisoned shaft. At this point I have a clear idea for the final image.





5 Adding back contrast

I start to add some large areas of value back into the scene. I tweak proportions, but I'm mainly worried about composition in terms of value. I remove the foreground figure for now to a slightly interesting, unfinished version. I move the staircase up into the background and add a blooming flowerpot, replete with some vines in the foreground. I'm considering a spotlight lighting setup, which will draw all focus on to the characters.



6 Painting in values

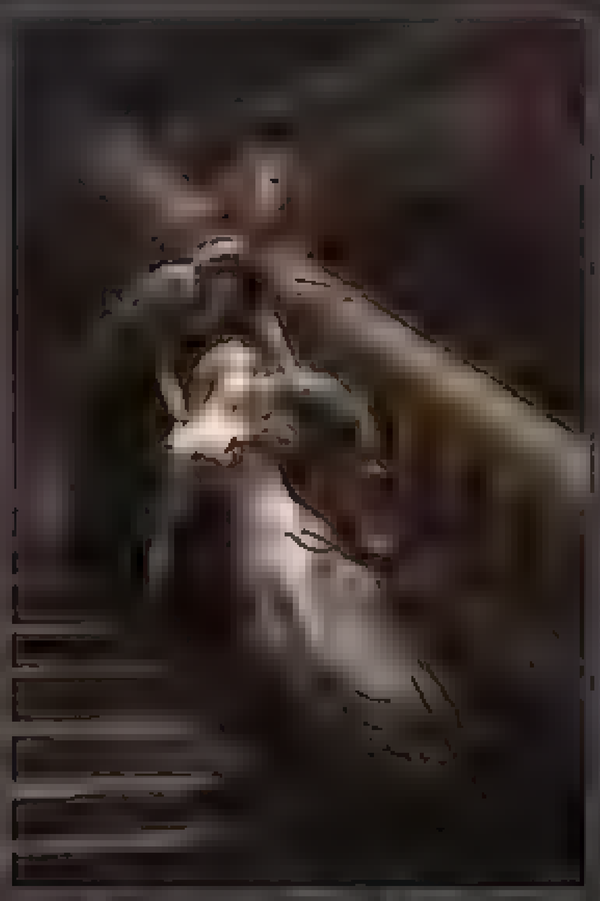
I was happy with the overall values and composition in the last sketch, so I start to paint in my values. Rather than I decided to work from black and white values first as this puts, because it will be a really challenging piece for me and I don't have much time to devote to it. Usually I find starting a painting in colour will result in more interesting colours on the canvas once it's finished, but it takes a lot of experience to get right.



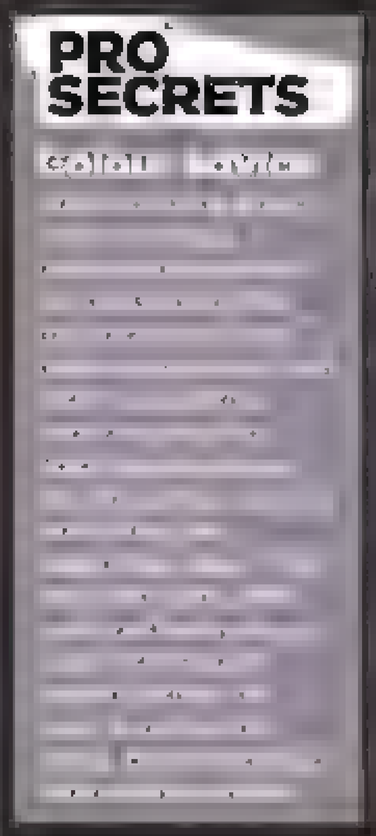


7 Applying colour

I start to add colour at this stage. I do so by opening the Layers panel and clicking Image>Adjustments>Gradient Map. This enables me to keep the temperature of the value, because usually in real life we find shadows cool and lights warm. It also means I can paint with a full colour palette without losing the value information. Next I paint over the whole image using Color blending mode

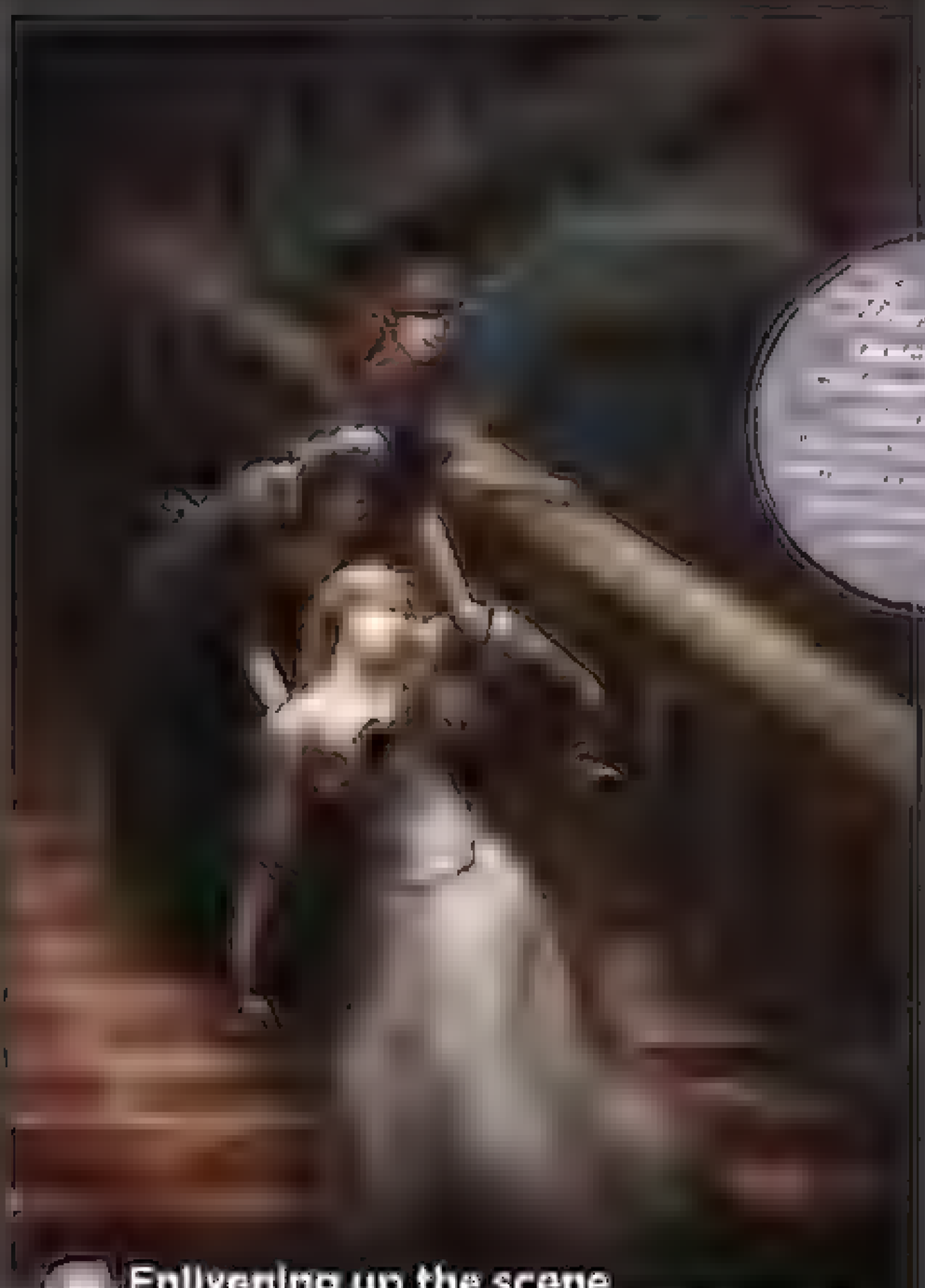


PRO SECRETS



8 Composition tweaking

I decide that the composition is too contained within the top-right hand corner. For me, composition is something entirely intuitive. I don't like to rigidly follow the Rule of Thirds or such, but just work with what feels right. I know that a lot of careful observation of whichever Old Master paintings worked compositionally helps with this. Along with a lot of sketching and photography.

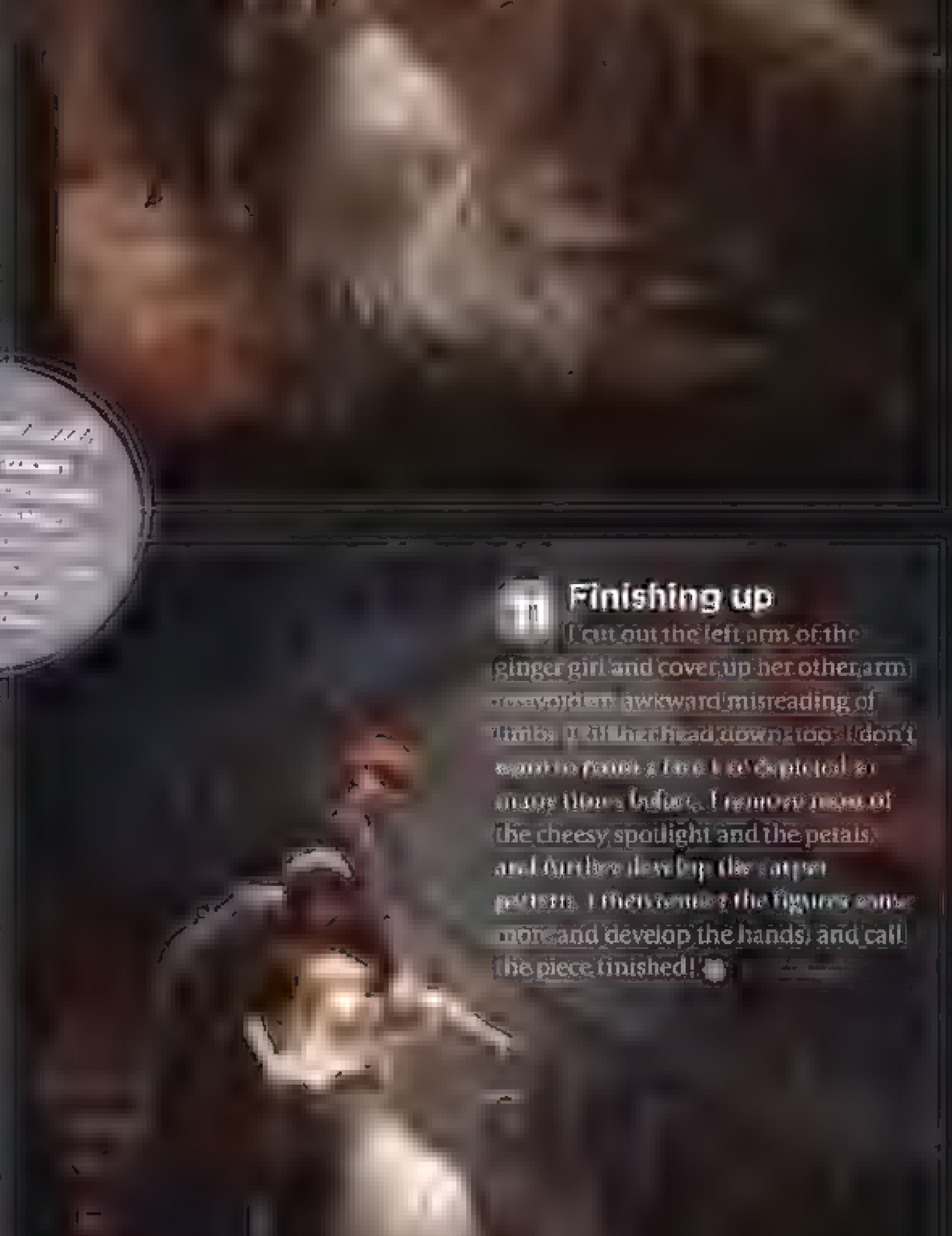


9 Enlivening up the scene

The colours are looking a bit dead so I add in a lot more colour, some turquoise stonework and a red carpet and drapes. I decide to work brazenly with saturated colours, because they can be dimmed down later with washes of midtones. It isn't easy to do the opposite and bring back large amounts of saturation. The dress is looking stiff, so I add more flow to it to match the stairs.

10 It's a kind of magic

I decide to bring together all the reds of the painting by adding falling petals, perhaps later to be developed into autumnal leaves. My explanation for why these falling dead leaves are inside a mansion is simple: magic! I also introduce a big spotlight but importantly I add in a second column to balance the composition. I develop more of a foreground and frame the entire image. I tweak some parts of the anatomy, too.



11 Finishing up

I cut out the left arm of the ginger girl and cover up her other arm – a classic awkward misreading of limbs. I tilt her head down too. I don't want to paint a face I've depicted so many times before. I remove most of the cheesy spotlight and the petals, and further develop the carpet pattern. I then refine the figures some more and develop the hands, and call the piece finished!

Photoshop & Painter

FLOWING AND CHAOTIC COMPOSITIONS

Kelley Harris leads the viewer's eye across her painting while explaining how to find rhythm and flow when illustrating a story

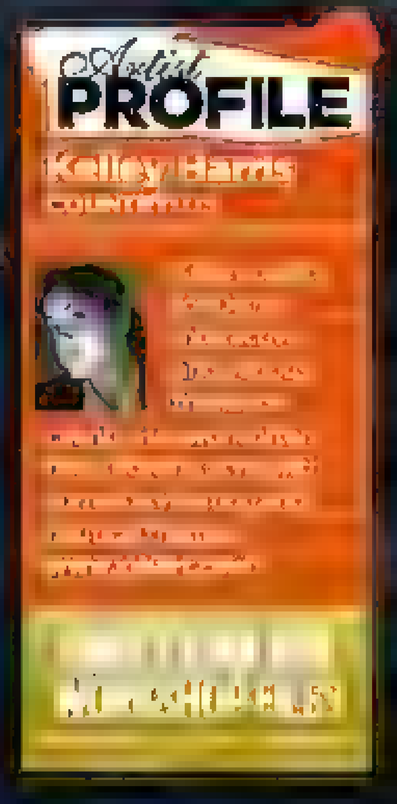


Illustration can often be a way to guide an artist or viewer on a visual journey of an idea or theme. Early on in the development of an idea, flow and compositional experimentation is vital to help develop a strong concept full of energy and life.

Importantly, it's also necessary to be constrained where focus is needed most in your painting. Keep in mind the idea of order within chaos and that balance is an important part of keeping wild elements in your painting under control. This is the foundation of the concept that's presented in my illustration.

I'm bringing to life a being of a massive scale and grace, set in an environment of even greater force and unpredictability. Yet within that chaos and untamed environment is a focal point that brings stability and grounds the idea of control while captivating an audience. To paint in such a way may be simpler than first perceived, and may rely more on the artist's intuitive side rather than technical learning in certain stages.

To be able to learn to trust in your instincts and to not overthink the way in which you wish to convey your story is one major aspect in formulating this type of illustration. Techniques innovative to doing this effectively include allowing loose forms to guide the direction of a drawing, when to hold back on details, and a strong sense of compositional arrangement of elements. Finally, discover unique patterns within the structure of your painting and create hidden interests along the way.

In depth Flowing compositions

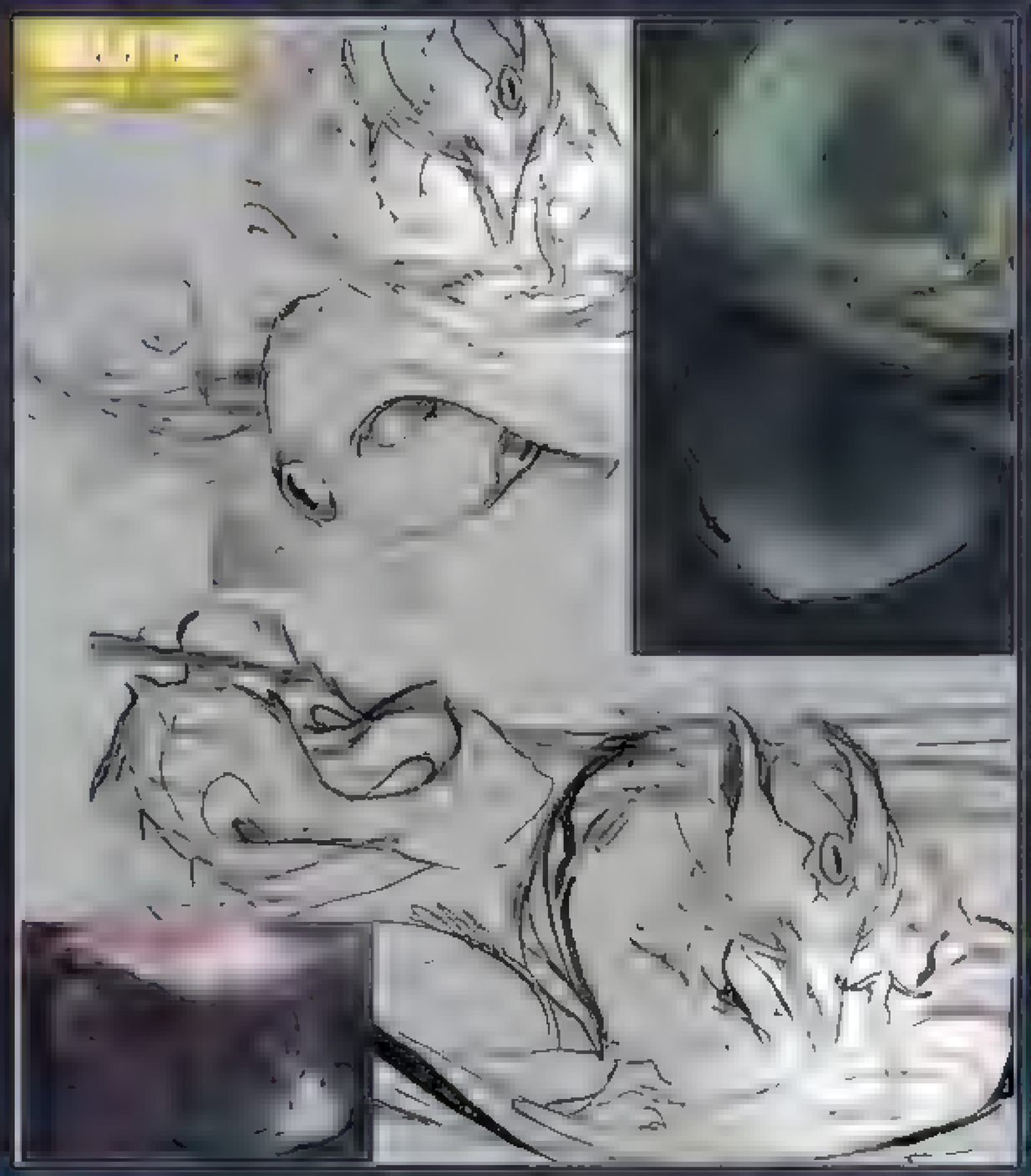
Stormage.com



Workshops

1 Preliminary work

Before developing an illustration it's best to be completely immersed in the subject you wish to paint. I have various thumbnails and colour compositions mocked up, which enables me to choose the idea that seems the most appealing to develop. This doesn't have to be neat – just something that will be easy to pull up within your workspace to reference whenever you need. Feel free to include your reference photos or inspiring images from your favourite artists.



2 A clean drawing

I start with a traditional drawing based on a series of thumbnails. The sketch remains loose overall, but tight in certain areas to denote where the more intense details should be illustrated. After I scan in the drawing, I start in Photoshop by cleaning up smudges, artefacts from the scan and unwanted strokes. It's best to remain reserved in this step, because the sketch has energy and character that's necessary for the movement of the painting as I move forward.



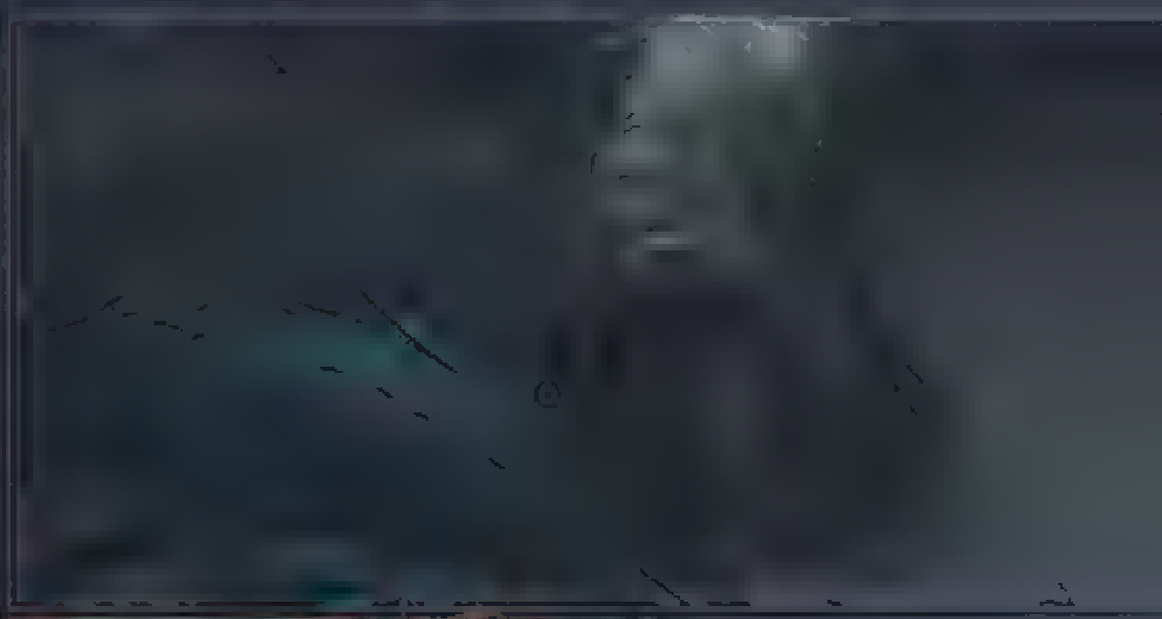


3 Background colour



4 A moody sky

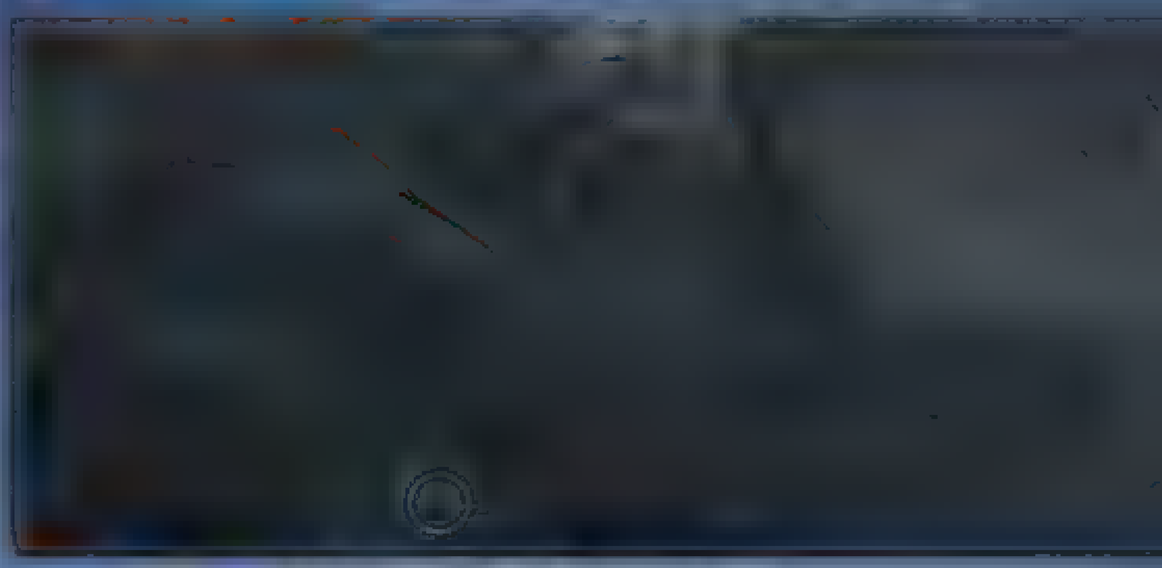
The lighting direction is one the most important parts of a painting because it conveys mood and movement. There will be multiple sources of light in my image, with the main source being the sky. Using a large Artist Oil brush, I block in colours of a moody sky with warm and cooler complements. In seascapes, there are unstable weather conditions that produce violent clouds and choppy waters. I use this opportunity to really push the focus on colour and drama.





5 Sea colours

I create a layer underneath the Sky layer and pull the colour into the foreground. This enables me to integrate the main lighting direction around the foreground masses and parts of the landscape. I focus on unifying the colour theme and mood between the foreground and background, foregoing the focal points that are the sea creature and the figure. Keep in mind possible colour combinations that will [illegible] on the figure [illegible]



6 Consider stylisation in your art

[illegible] painting progresses, carefully [illegible] areas of your painting [illegible] and [illegible] stylise and push the texture into more stylistic. Always try to find [illegible] hidden away in your own brushwork which can be transformed into something more! Refine and highlight these places to catch your audience's eye when they navigate your painting.



7 Introduce sea spray

Select the Fine Spray 50 Airbrush variant and add drama to the surrounding environment. Reduce opacity and spray size to slowly build on the whitecaps of the sea, and adjust the Spread and Feature options in the brush settings bar to increase or decrease the amount of spray. I'm selective about where I place the spray throughout the composition, so as not to distract or cover up important elements.

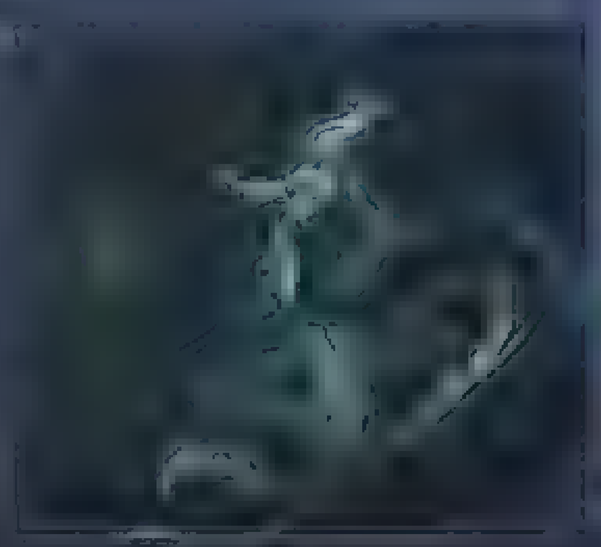


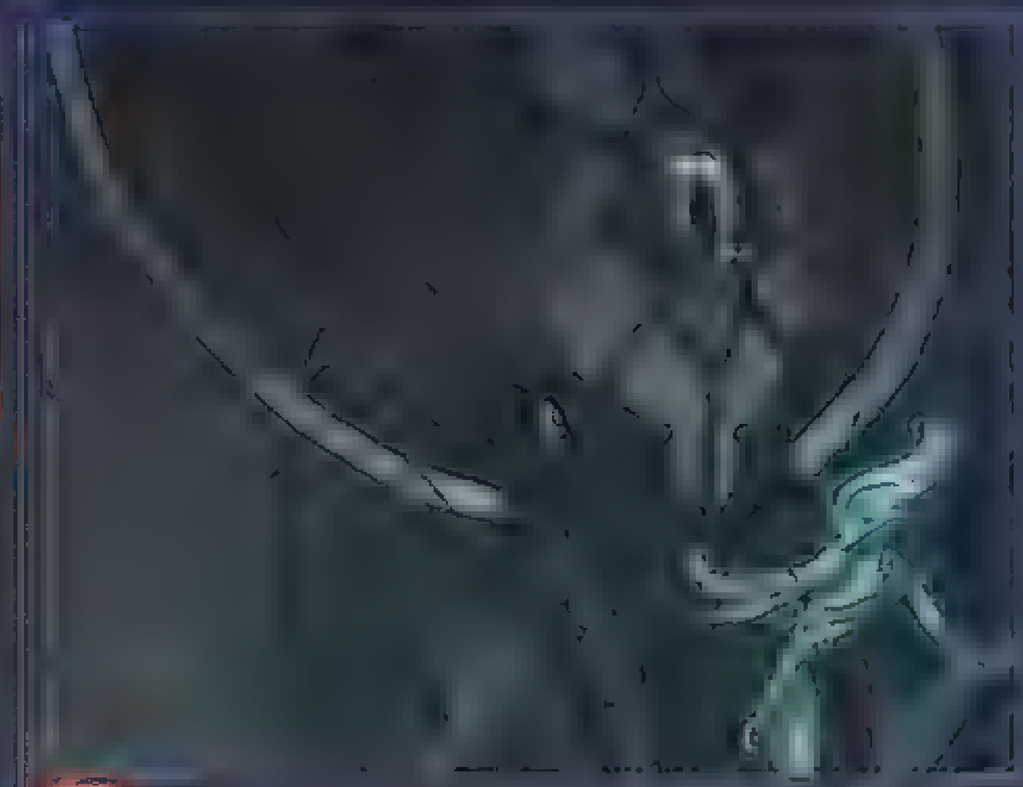
8 Detailing the figure

I begin blocking in and detailing the figure. The colour contrasts highly with the background because I'm concerned about clashing elements becoming lost at this point in the painting process. I add details and highlights as I focus on the figure – not often with an Airbrush variant. At this stage the figure seems to come across as a human-like being and doesn't appear to be sitting comfortably within the environment that surrounds her. It may be time to experiment.

9 Changing plans

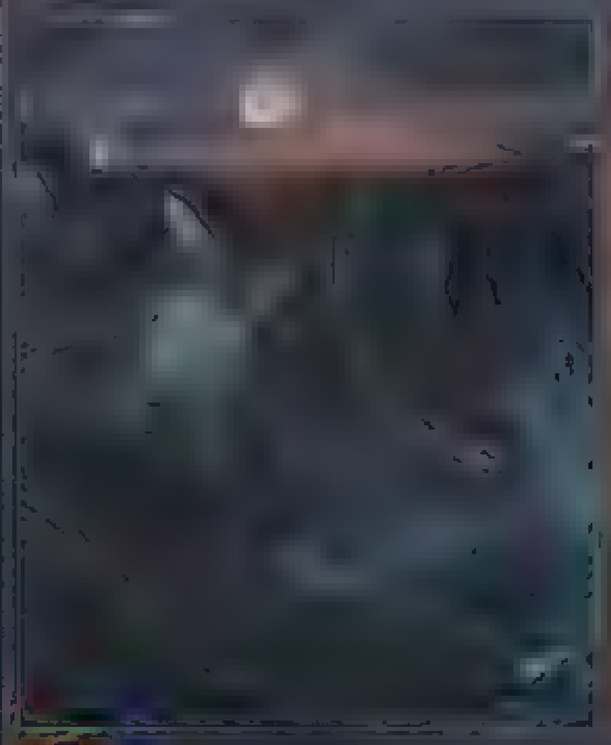
As the painting progresses, I have an idea that the character could be a sea mage, commanding a great and fearsome being from the deep. The anatomy of the figure and design begin to change shape from the ray, and sketch out. My advice is that if something doesn't feel right as you paint, then it's best to deviate from your drawing. Paint over it and experiment. Use the layers to your advantage and create multiple ideas.

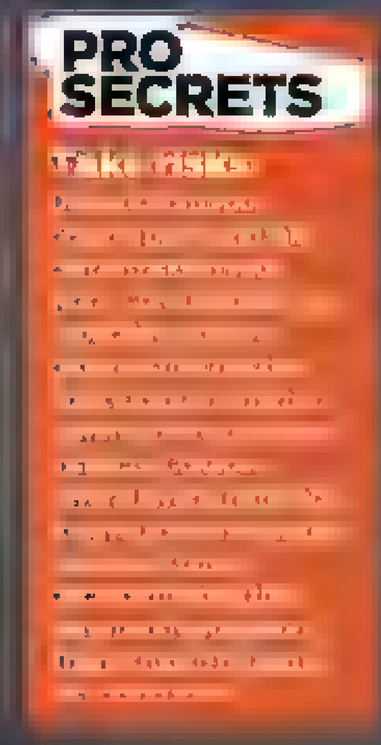




10 Serpent head details

A daunting part of the illustration is the ornate design of the serpent, because it will have lots of colours competing with the sea mage. It's important to make sure that the creature's eye stands out. I choose a reptilian eye because it's more likely to be found in aquatic environments. A small eye is also shown on the back of my sea mage as a way to indicate that these two beings share more than just a living environment.





11 Serpent body colour

I create a new Layer and block in colour for the serpent's body. The colour choice needs to be a theme that would be found in a sea environment, while having the ability to contrast with the rest of the painting. I take advantage of colours within the background and exaggerate them on the body of the serpent. Within the foreground, the lighting direction and reflection from the mage and surrounding waves are included in my colour choices.

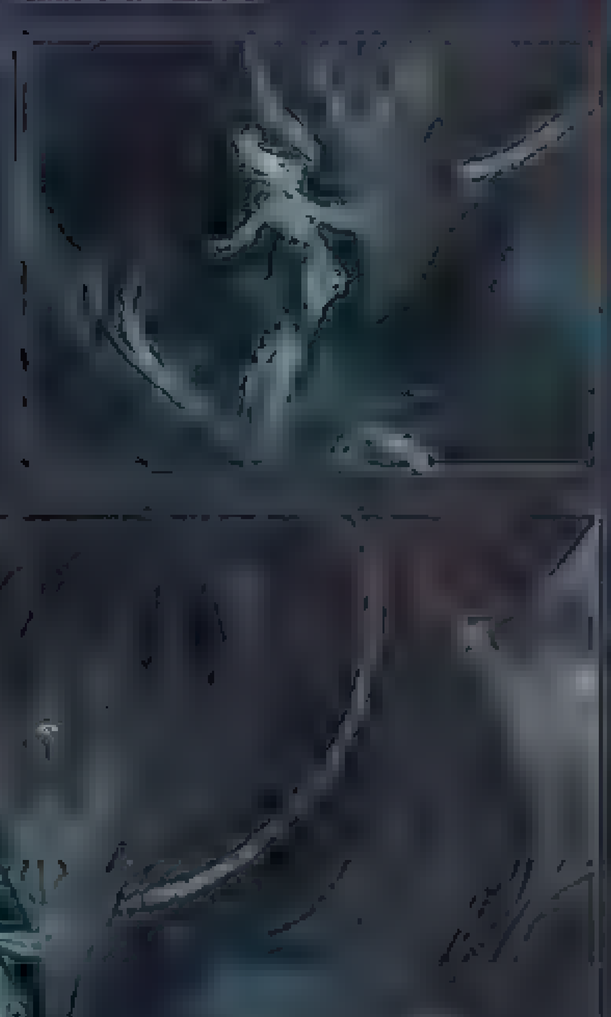


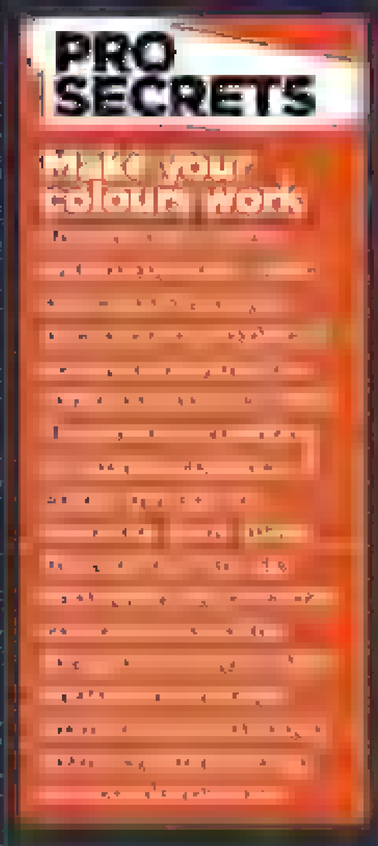
12 Blocking in using Oils

The Flat Oil brush variant is one of the main brushes I use to block in and render colour. This brush is versatile in the way that it's used. Short and hatching strokes create brush texture across various surfaces. Detail and Glazing Oil brush variants can add shine and fine details to areas that have more interest, such as scales and horns.

13 Making the mage stand out

The mage is starting to compete for attention. She needs to be one of the first things the viewer will look to, so we need to subdue the details and colour variations going on around her. I select the Lasso tool, make a selection around the character and darken the background to [illegible] that may make reading the character a lot harder than it should be.







16 Unusual elements

The waves surrounding the serpent and mage could use a few touches of colour to add areas of interest. Use opportunities like these to add abstract objects to compositions that may, or may not, have an artistic or logical explanation, but are merely put in for visual appeal. Journals, cupholders, orbs of magic energy or objects can add a geometric shape to break up the foreground.

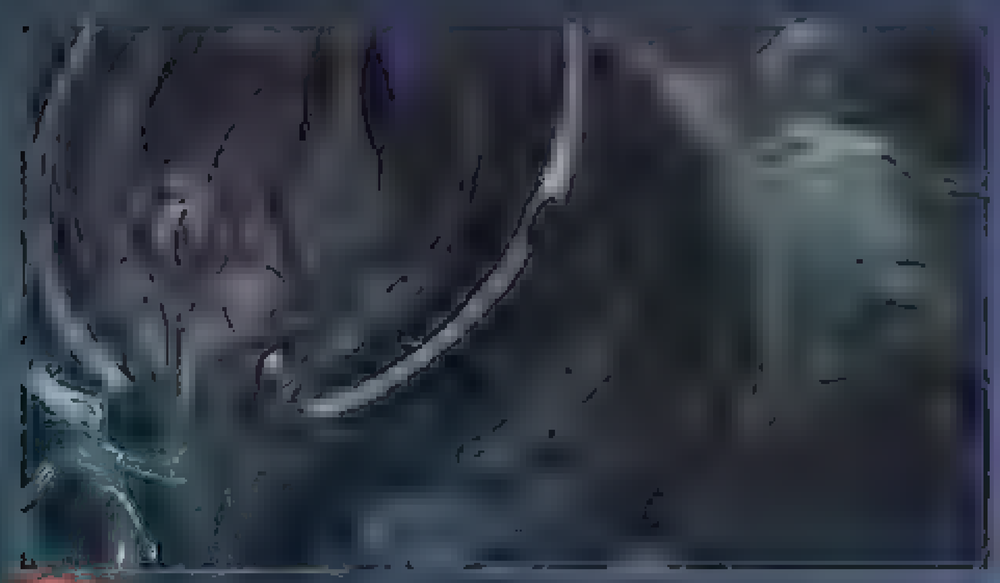


17 Brush use

I move back to Photoshop to apply additional stylisation to the sea. To play on the mage's powers, I place floral accents along the flow of the waves within the foreground. I like the idea these are located in areas where the viewer's eye will eventually wander to while exploring the image. I take care while placing these designs, so as not to distract from the focus of the composition.

14 Cast shadows

The lighting is starting to appear stronger where the two beings are facing each other. To have the most effective lighting, shadows are just as important as the brightest of highlights. I introduce a dramatic cast shadow from the face and accessories that's shown across the body of the serpent. Dark and deeply saturated colours in the same hue as the lighting scheme help to add dramatic tension.





15 Magic and colour

This is not just an ordinary concept of a snake or serpent. The creature has a sense of power and magic that needs to be conveyed to the viewer. Its unusual design requires colours that accentuate its form and make it look as if it's part of the surrounding environment. I choose appealing design. These colours are selected from the background of the painting to further harmonise the creature and its environment.

18 Finishing up

[illegible] painting [illegible] I move back and forth between [illegible] Photoshop, [illegible] painting [illegible] Wacom tablet. [illegible] several adjustment layers to make changes to levels, contrast and [illegible] changes [illegible] the process. [illegible] Adding a polish [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

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Rags Morales, Tony Daniel, Frank Quitely and others explore the artistic history of Superman.

Discover how to colour intricate line art as Ash Thorp paints Marvel's Punisher in a fight to the finish.

Mike Mayhew takes time away from drawing the new Star Wars comic to talk about his art.

ISSUE 97 ON SALE FRIDAY 24 MAY 2013

Workshop

BRING A MAGICAL FOREST TO LIFE

Artist PROFILE



Dongli Yu demonstrates how to experiment with natural textures deep within an enchanted forest scene

Forests are such a rich subject matter to explore, in no small part because of the huge number of creatures that live in them. I'd recommend gathering as many photo references as you can before starting your painting.

Don't limit yourself to grabbing photos from the internet. Explore a selection of books from your local library, or pore over photos that you've taken yourself during trips into the great outdoors. Then there are your memories from your daily lives: the first hint of sunlight at dawn, the mist of a winter morning, a bird singing on a branch near your window. The memories that have made a mark in your mind can help you to integrate great ambiance and emotions in your painting.

Of course, the forest is a widely used subject in all kinds of art styles. It offers endless possibilities for visual variations because of the different sizes and shapes of vegetation and the changes they go through during the seasons, and the colours of the indigenous species. Initially you'll find that it'll take time to paint an environment that's full of different vegetation, rock formations and animals. However, with these tips I hope to help your painting process go a little smoother.

When painting an enchanted forest scene, it's not only useful to study the different textures separately, but also to make smart choices and create combinations in one painting to contrast the differences between the textures. This will enable you to enhance the beauty of individual elements.



1

Foliage

It would take forever to paint complex trees using a default round brush. My solution is to make my own custom brushes by using the photos that I've taken during my trips and extracting the trees to make the brushes. They naturally possess the randomness and the intricacy that nature has embedded in the tree shapes. When I've made a few of these tree brushes, I use them to erase and paint with different opacities. You can produce convincing results in a fairly short amount of time.

2

Shrubs

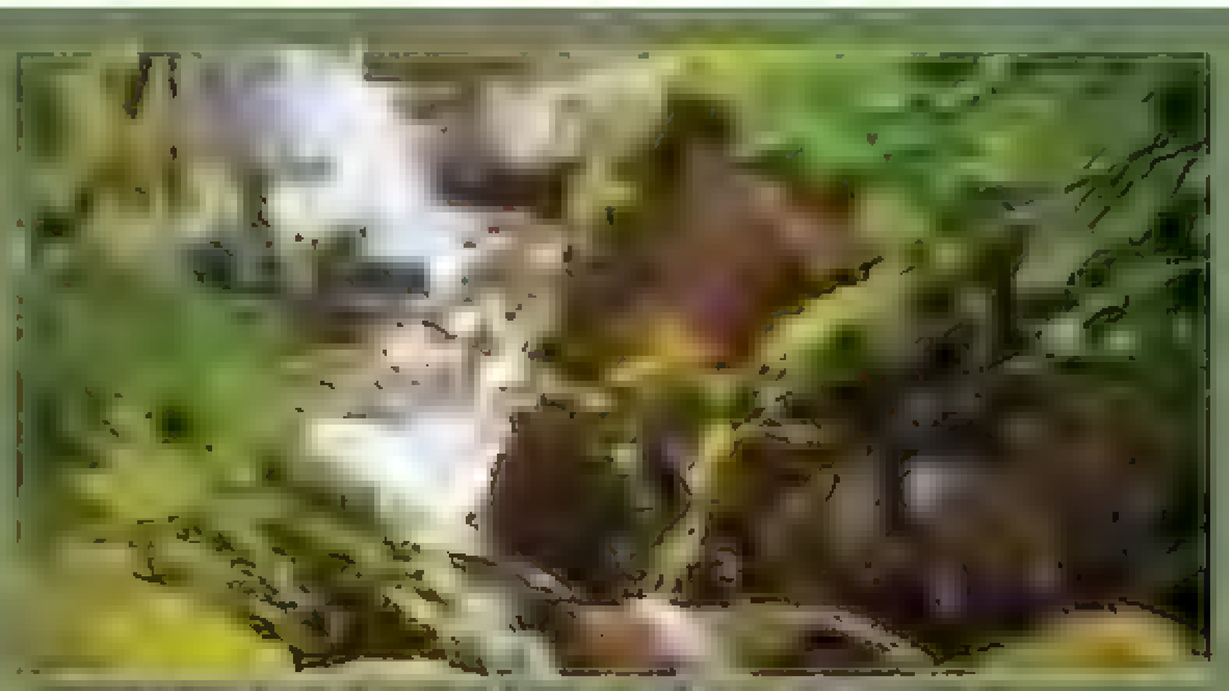
Shrubs are another element that can be found in a forest scene. They can be used to contrast the tallness of the trees and to create interesting, fresh compositions. There are countless variations in the types of bushes, such as aloe, boxwood and juniper. As long as the bush's main shape is drawn correctly, it can be easily recognised. And for spicing the shrub up a little bit, try combining it with some fantasy elements, such as a fairy, magic sparkles and glowing insects. >

PRO SECRETS



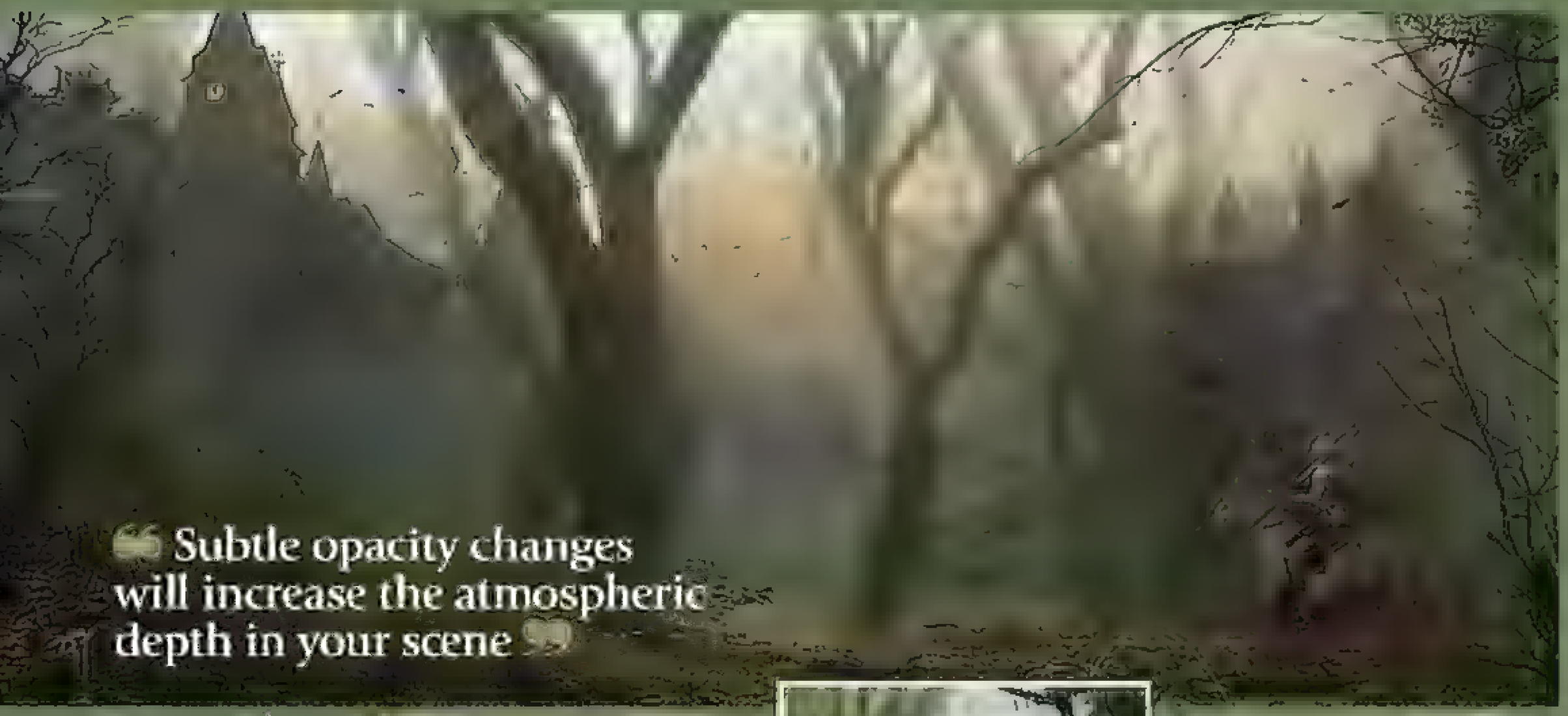
3

Moss growing on tree trunks is never the centre of attention in a forest scene, but without it the trees would have much less visual variety. The soft texture of moss contrasts nicely with the tough bark of the tree. When painting the moss, be sure to reveal in places the texture of the trunk underneath. This overlapping approach brings richness to the textures that you're trying to illustrate.



COMBINE SOFT AND HARD EDGES

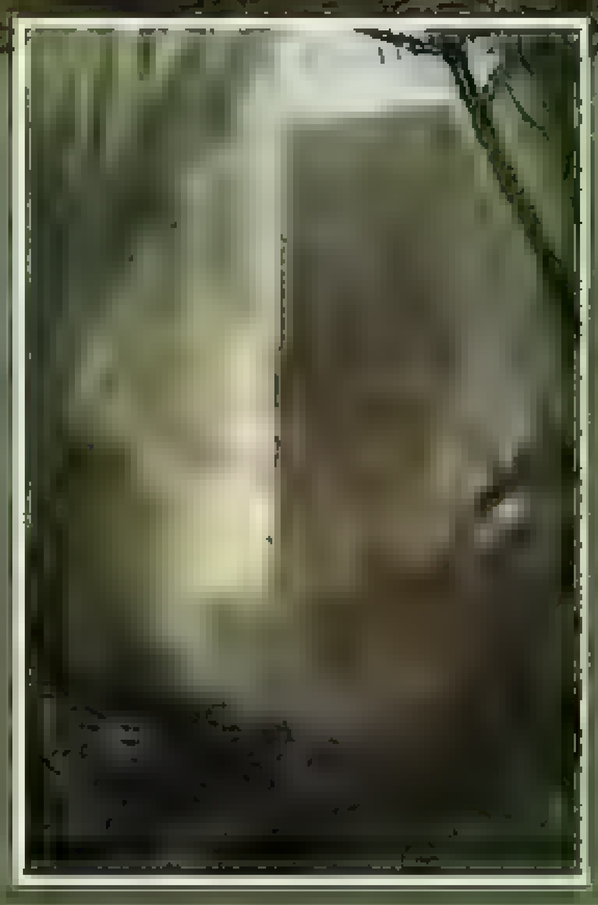
A forest stream contrasts well with the static rocks that it's flowing over. To achieve the right look I first lay down [illegible] edges. Then I take a Soft Round brush to paint a mid-grey tone on top of the dark rocks to indicate the path of the steam. Finally, I build the steam value tone slowly by overlapping lighter and lighter greys on top of each other.



> Subtle opacity changes will increase the atmospheric depth in your scene

4 [illegible]

Mist is ideal for building up a mysterious ambiance. I rarely use the Round Airbrush for painting the forest elements because I love to preserve clean silhouettes, but it becomes my best friend for boosting the atmosphere, especially for the mist. Set the Soft Round brush on a low opacity then paint between the background/sky and the foreground elements until you reach the mist density that you're looking for. The longer you take while painting the subtle opacity changes, the further you can increase the atmospheric depth in your scene.



6 [illegible]

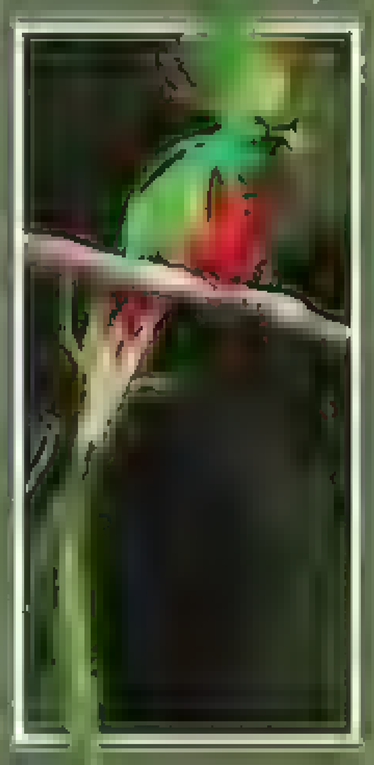
Adding some moss-covered stones can give you extra composition options. Place them in the bottom corners on the canvas to block in the central subject. However, it's important not to overpaint them. Spending a tremendous amount of time painting every single detail rarely produces a better-finished painting. Just throw in enough colour and shape information to tell the viewers that these are rocks covered with moss, leave some room and simplified areas for the viewer's own interpretation. The final result will be much more pleasing than an overdetailed mess.



7

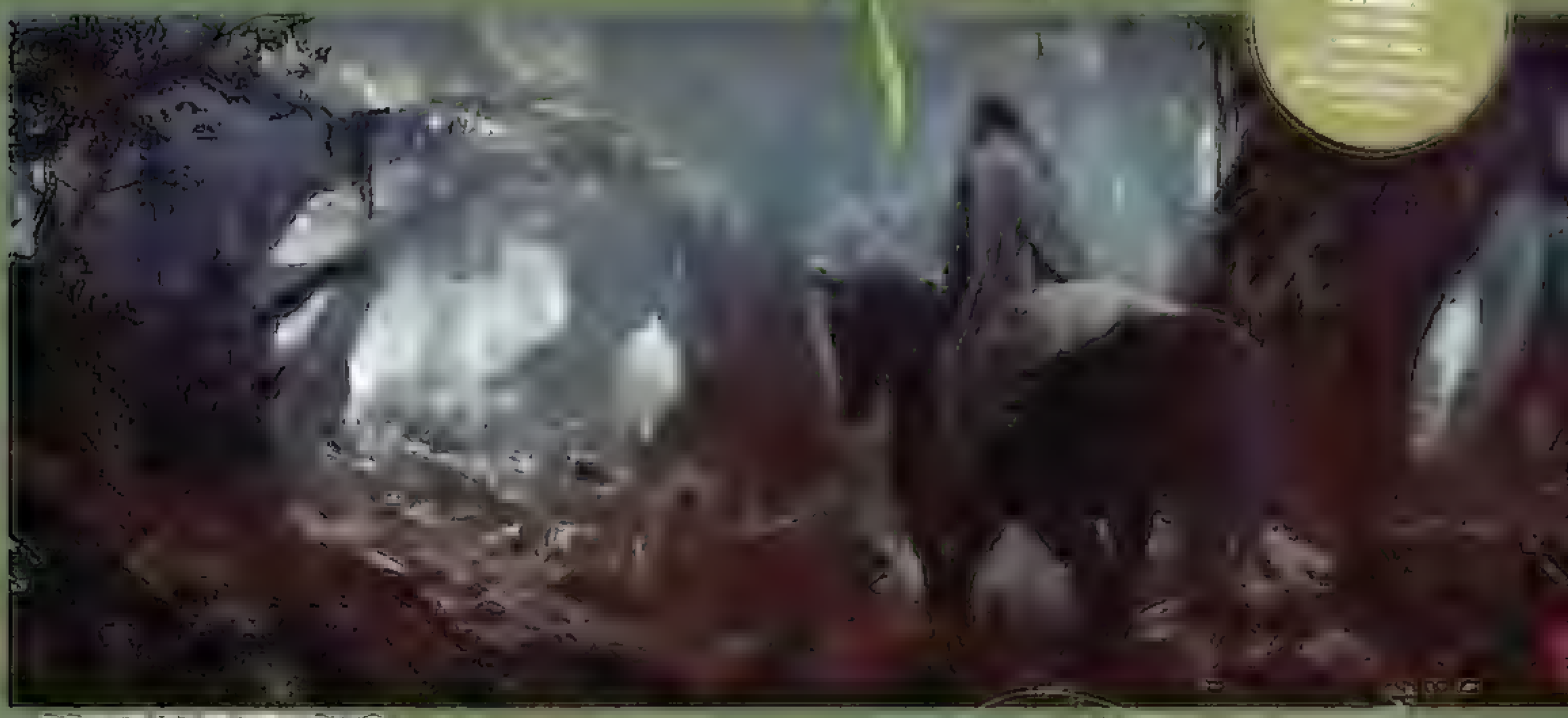
Another trick that can make a forest scene appealing is the lighting. Often you'll see light beams shining through the leaves and branch canopy. It creates an area of high contrast in the image that will instantly capture the viewer's eye. These beams of light can easily be achieved with the Soft Round brush at a low opacity, just like the mist. Under such lighting conditions you'll grasp the importance of silhouettes, they can describe the elements so well without any other extra information

Create imaginative creatures by combining different animals from real life



9

To further push the fantasy side of the forest scenes, consider creating imaginative creatures by combining different animals from real life. For example, exaggerate colourful feathers, lengthen a tail, making certain body parts grow or widen the wingspan. Putting imaginative creatures into a believable forest setting can achieve a balance between reality and the imagination, thus creating an



BRING OUT STRONG EMOTIONS WITH THE DRY BRUSH

Just as the Round Airbrush can generate a romantic feeling, an extensive use of the Dry brush can generate feelings of darkness, death, [illegible] painting. That's why it's my first choice for drawing dead trees and branches. The brush is able to create another kind of fantasy that's the exact opposite of the romantic fantasy represented by the faeries and glowing vegetation, for instance.



10

A forest scene is often quite still and conveys a real sense of quietness. Take this opportunity to introduce some contrast by painting some butterflies to introduce some motion to the outline of the butterflies, fill in the basic colour and finally add some patterns in the wings. When portraying flying butterflies, it helps to give them just a little bit of motion blur. If you're painting a close-up of a butterfly in a forest setting, blur the background slightly so the viewer can focus on the right elements.

Photoshop

TAKE INSPIRATION FROM HISTORY

Painting a character influenced by the past can be an interesting exercise, says **Clint Cearley**. Just don't become overwhelmed by the research...



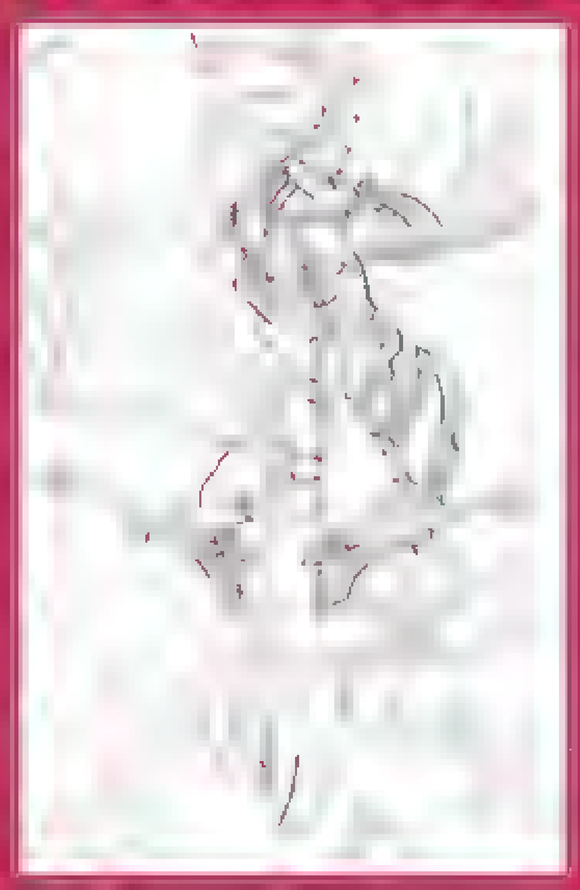
As a fan of mythology I'm excited to work on Aurora. The client wants a younger sister to the sun god Apollo, who's a beautiful young woman symbolising creativity and enlightenment. The scene is the moment she descends to bring light and end the long war.

Character design is the first element to approach, but not a difficult one because I know she should take her visual cues from Roman and Greek armour of the period. With reference books in hand I define the two major cues to keep: the mohawk shape of the iconic Greek helmet and the layered shoulder and torso plates from Roman armour.

After several sketches I lock in a design direction that I feel incorporates the classic cues, while still allowing her to be femininely beautiful without resorting to a chainmail bikini. It becomes quickly apparent that a prop would be extremely useful so, while it's not specified by the client, I decide to give her a bow that I think is a fitting weapon for a refined sun goddess. The decision to include a bow with its natural cross pattern largely directs the later composition design.

One last element I add is the flowing white fabric, which is indicative of classic paintings of mythology and a fantastic compositional tool.

How I create... A GODDESS AT SUNRISE



1 Composition

2 Controlling colour

3 Reference and finish

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSH
SAMPLED BRUSH

Most of my artwork is painted with standard Round brushes, but I did use a stretched custom brush for bits of the background light beam.

Historical inspiration

Define the figure

While such a thing would not realistically appear, I choose to add a small stroke to the outside of the neck and torso areas. These lines help sharpen the shapes and visually distinguish between various elements that are similar in colour and value. This reinforces the already stark silhouette of the dark armour against the background.

Simulate light effects

In an effort to add more visual impact, I ratchet up the background light intensity by brightening the area behind her head, the coronas and the light beams, with a Linear Dodge layer. While a newer blending mode to Photoshop (and Linear Dodge is the most realistic when it comes to simulating light effects. As a subtler change, a Lighten layer is added over the clothing to brighten, convey more light brilliance and shift it towards being a background element.

Start with the face

Faces are key. The rest of the image may be solid but if the face fails then the image will largely fail, which is why I focus on establishing it first. I paint it as far as needed for me to feel good about it, then move on to the rest of the image. Spend your time on the crucial elements first and don't be sidetracked by superfluous details.

Choose a suitable value scheme

As important as a good colour scheme is, a good value scheme is more so. I want a strong and simple value scheme so I focus on three points: the figure standing out dark against the background; the background containing no darks to compete with the figure; and both light and darks shifting towards mid-tones as you go lower.

Procreate

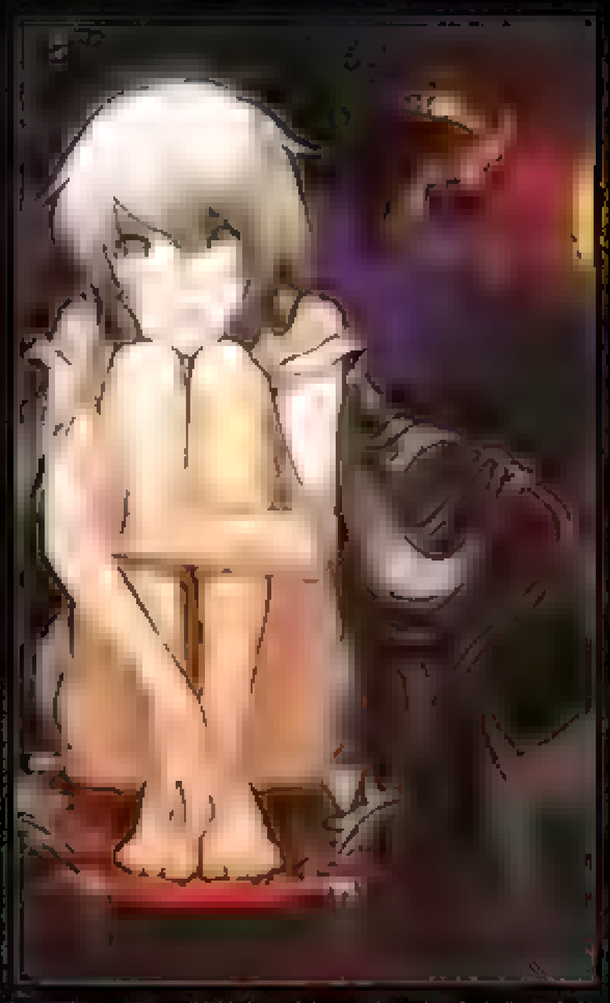
GETTING TO KNOW PROCREATE

Don't be fooled by the seemingly small amount of tools on offer, **Paul Tysall** explains why less is more with this highly applauded art app

It's fair to say that I've been a fan of Procreate since its launch two years ago, and the things that appealed to me then are still relevant today. Its clean, understated design, ultra-fluid performance and versatile brush engine all come together to make this my go-to app when kicking off a new painting.

On the surface Procreate can look a little underwhelming to some users, especially alongside other apps that appear to offer every art tool under the sun. However, you shouldn't let Procreate's unfussy UI fool you into thinking it doesn't pack a punch when it comes to how capable it is.

Over the course of these bite-sized workshops we'll be covering the fundamentals of working with this industry-level painting app and uncovering some tricks that will take you a little deeper into this powerful art tool. First up though, let's get familiar with that interface.



Demonstrating what Procreate's brushes are truly capable of: 'Memories Lamp painted by Asuka111.'

Artist PROFILE



SIDE-BAR AND SLIDERS

I. Brush size

This slider scales your brush. A great little preview window pops up as you resize, so you can see how the brush characteristics will change with scale.

J. Brush opacity

Another fluid slider, this one alters the opacity. You can also set these sliders to appear on the right-hand edge under Actions>General.

K. Undo & Redo

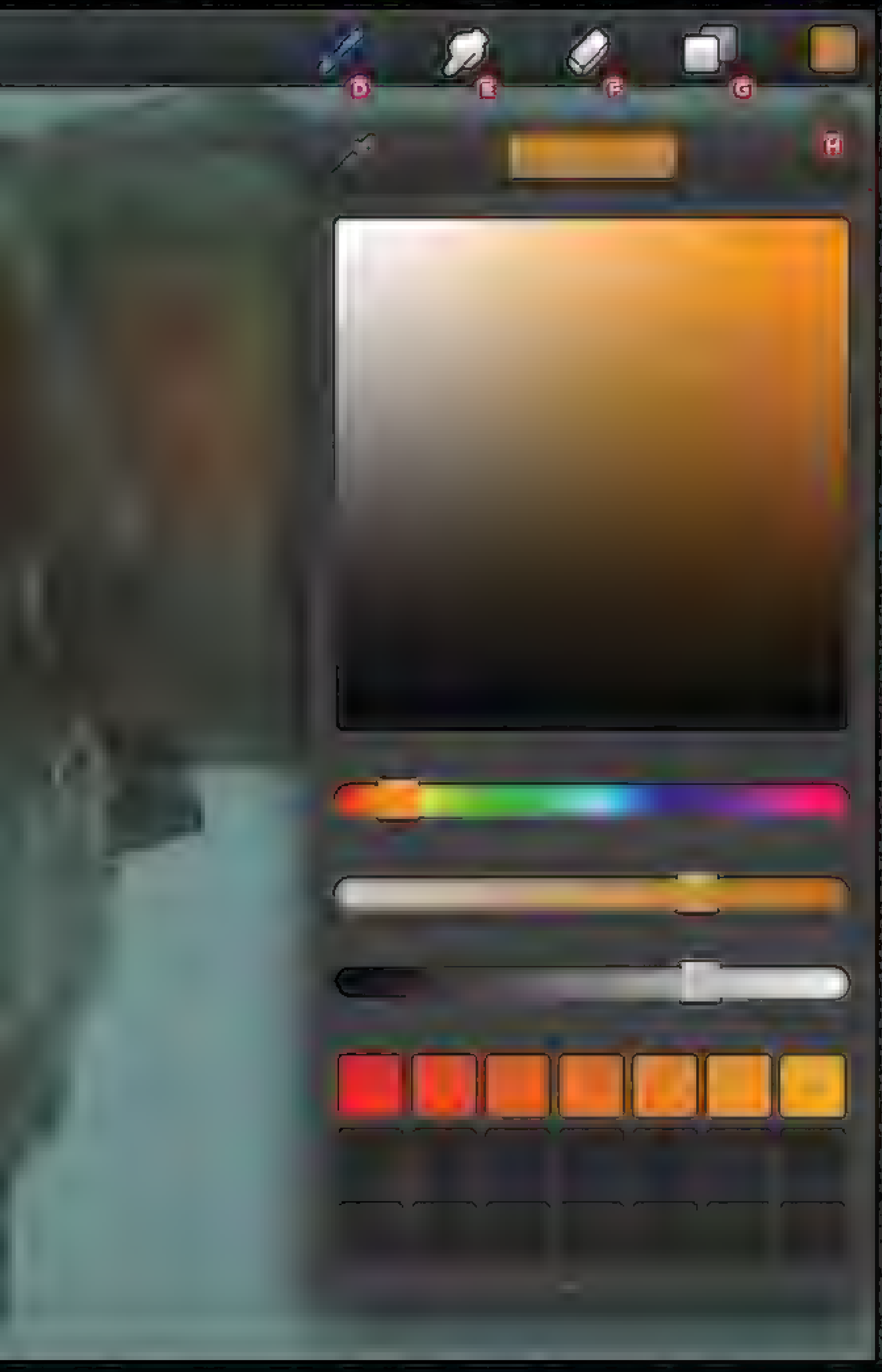
Procreate has up to 250 steps. Use these [illegible] swipe – left to Undo or right to Redo.



GETTING TO KNOW THE INTERFACE

A. Gallery
Click here to head back to the gallery section. Doing this will automatically save and close your art for you making this a seamless transition between work and art.

B. Actions
From here you can insert images – from Photos, the Clipboard, the iPad camera and Dropbox – under the Canvas settings. You can also flip your art. There are options to share and export your artwork and set up external accessories such as various styluses. There are also handy options like Smart Hide and Eyedropper, which enable you to dictate the duration each tool takes to action.



C. Transform
Scale, Rotate and Flip are all located here. You can Transform a layer using Magnetics, which maintains a perfect axis for movement or scaling, or free transform each anchor point to distort the layer.

D. Brush tool
This is what makes Procreate such a fantastic painting app. From here you can select, edit and even create brushes. We shall cover Brushes in greater depth in the following issues.

E. Smudge tool
Soften and merge brush strokes from here, with the same wide range of brushes featured.

F. Eraser tool
Select this to remove unwanted strokes. As with the Smudge tool you have the choice to select from all of Procreate's brush types.

G. Layers
Click this to open the layers drop-down panel. We shall be covering Layers in a future edition.

H. Color palette
Broken into three main sections: Color picker, HSB sliders and a Swatch palette. You can also select the colour sampler from here.

© Nikki Lockerbie www.lockerbie.net

FIRST STEPS FOR MAKING A CANVAS



1 Getting started
From the Gallery screen click the Plus symbol (top-right corner). You're presented with a drop-down panel with three presets to choose from: Retina (2,048x1,536px), Square (2,048x2,048px) and Cinema (4,096x2,160px). Yes, you read that right: 4,096 pixels! This is one of the first benefits of using Procreate as your art app of choice.



2 Create a canvas
Click the dimensions values next to the entry Custom. This flips the panel over to reveal a numeric keypad, and you can add any values up to 4,096 pixels. Note: the larger the canvas, the fewer the layers, so a 4,096x4,096px canvas will only allow for two layers. Stick to the more-than-adequate Retina size and the layer count comes in at 28.



3 Populate a Gallery
Inputting the values 2,048x1,152 gives us a 16:9 landscape widescreen canvas. Click the Gallery button to close and save the new canvas, and then tap the grey strip under the thumbnail: enables you to name the artwork. You can also reorientate the canvas while in Gallery view by rotating it using two fingers, and create Stacks – which are essentially folders – by dragging one thumbnail over another.

Photoshop

LEARN TO PAINT FABRIC IN MOTION

Anna Steinbauer reveals her technique for painting cloth on a moving character, which will help to add a sense of dynamism to your work

Artist PROFILE

Anna Steinbauer

COUNTRY: Austria



After going to school to study graphic design, Anna knew it was time to follow her true passion and started her career as a freelance illustrator. She hasn't regretted her decision.

www.bit.ly/asteinbauer

Cloth is one of those great compositional elements that can be manipulated to fit your needs, so make use of it whenever you have the chance

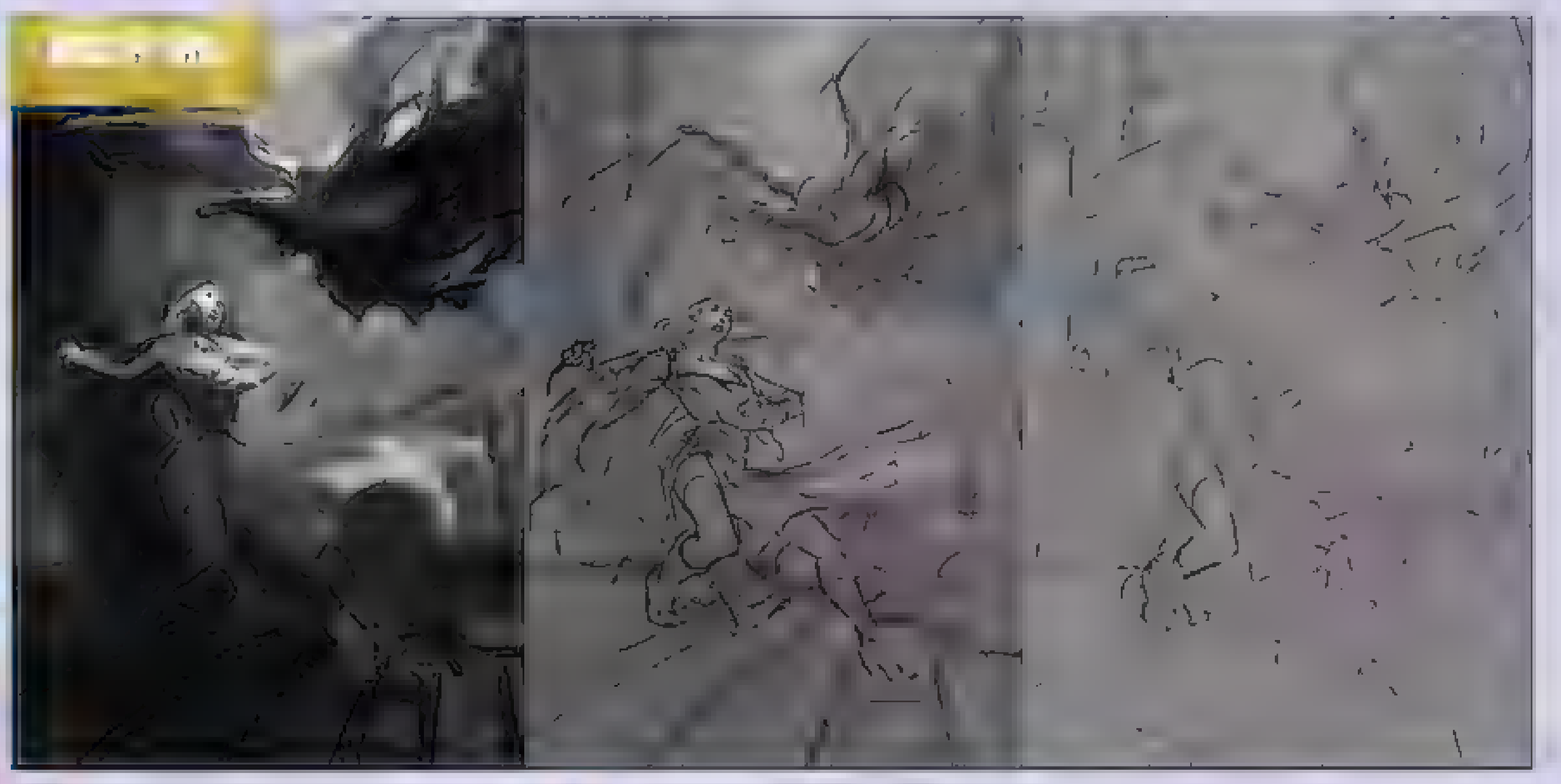
Free-flowing fabric helps in suggesting directional motion, because they show where the object they are attached to was just seconds ago. If your character isn't moving, a wind tugging at the clothing can create a dynamic feeling instead

Folds in cloth appear due to certain forces pulling at it. To keep it simple, remember only these two factors: the first force is gravity, the second one a combination of several, which we will treat as one. Think of it as 'air', as it can be either wind or static air acting like wind as it resists the body moving through it

When combined they create the familiar flapping motion, as air tries to push past the cloth while gravity pulls it down. This effect is more extreme the further away a piece of cloth is from the point of support (where it's attached to or rests on a solid object, such as a person)

Be aware of the properties of the different materials when designing your folds. Stiff linen will lead to sharper folds, soft cotton or wool to rounder ones; thin materials such as chiffon will show more and smaller folds than thicker cloth and so on. By all means, use references. But don't take an image and copy it – try to analyse what's happening in your reference and adjust it to work with the conditions in your painting.

With all this in mind, let's get on with the painting.



PRO SECRETS

Kill your darlings

Don't be afraid to make big changes as you go along. Even if you've spent a large amount of time painting that one part, rendering it to perfection won't make up for a flawed drawing underneath. Sure, you don't want to lose all the work you've put into it, but if something just isn't working, go ahead and fix it. The time isn't wasted as long as it makes for a better image in the end.

1 From thumbnail to early sketch

After deciding on a composition I enlarge the chosen thumbnail to the size that the final image needs to be and start sketching on top of it. The first sketch is still quite rough, but I make another layer on top of it and refine it further. I repeat this step until I've worked out the anatomy and perspective, but I don't get too detailed because I'll probably change some elements later on

2 Placing big, medium and small elements

As I'm planning my folds, I think about the design principle of big, medium and small shapes. I try to vary the sizes and avoid having too many similar looking ones close to each other. Just like in bodies twisting and turning of single folds or an entire piece of fabric adds a sense of movement. Folds become tighter when they bend, and wider the further away they are from the point of support.





Shortcuts
Clipping Mask
Ctrl+Alt+G (PC)
Cmd+Option+G (Mac)
This combination creates a Clipping Mask from the selected layer

3 Choosing the colours

I start putting down some colours underneath the layer with the line drawing. I have a rough idea of the palette I want, but sometimes it helps to play around with Levels and Curves at this point. After I've decided on a basic colour scheme, I separate the different elements of the painting into new layers. Now I lock the transparency of each layer and continue refining the colours and establishing light sources

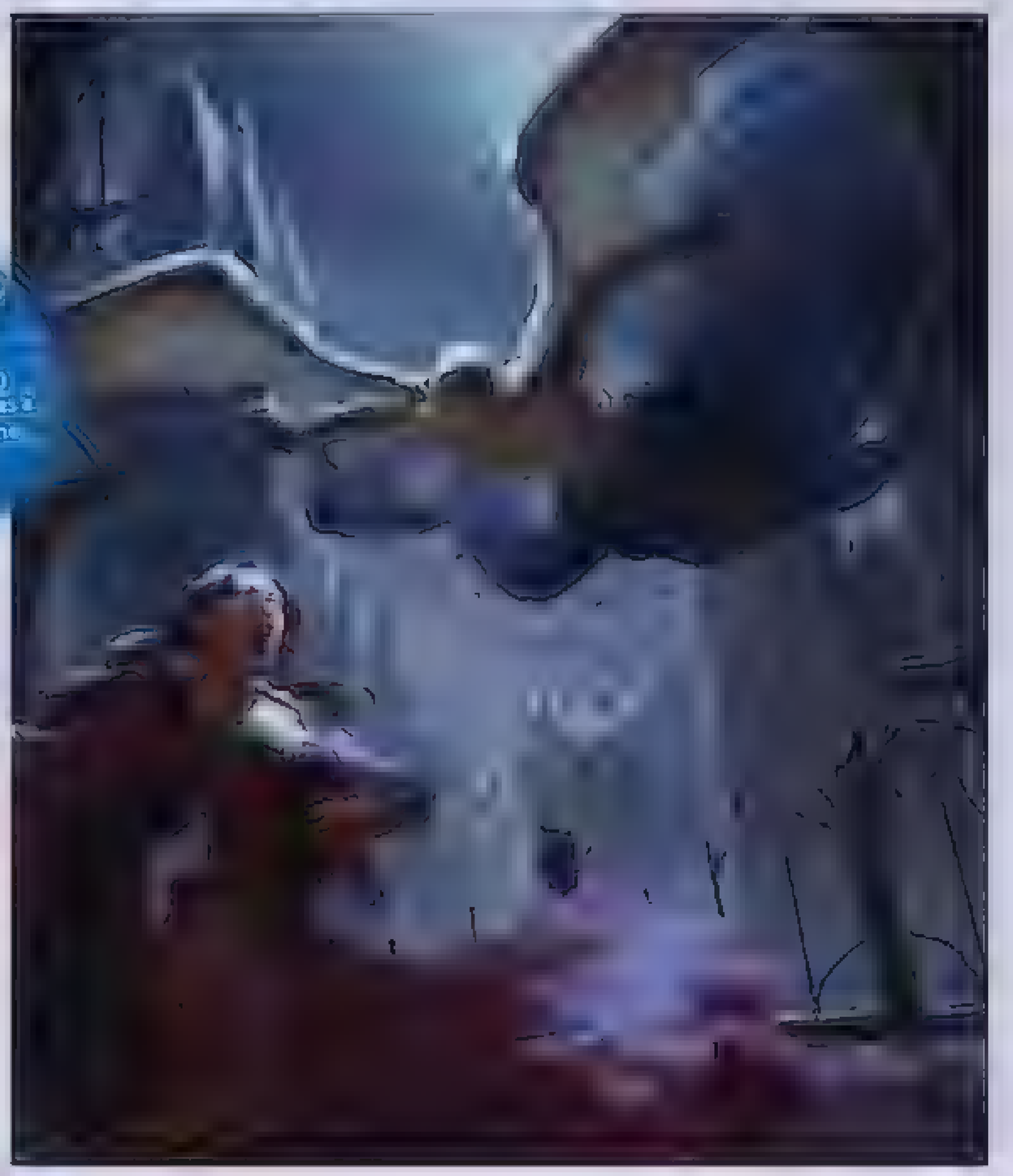


4 Organising the layers

I continue working on the basic lay in, but also divide elements further using Clipping Masks. I put areas that touch each other on to different Clipping Masks, while trying to keep the layer count as low as possible. That way, for example, my character's boots, belt and sleeves share a layer, while being isolated from the skin. To make navigation easier, I combine layers into groups. Now I can paint quickly with a large brush while maintaining the edges

5 A new background

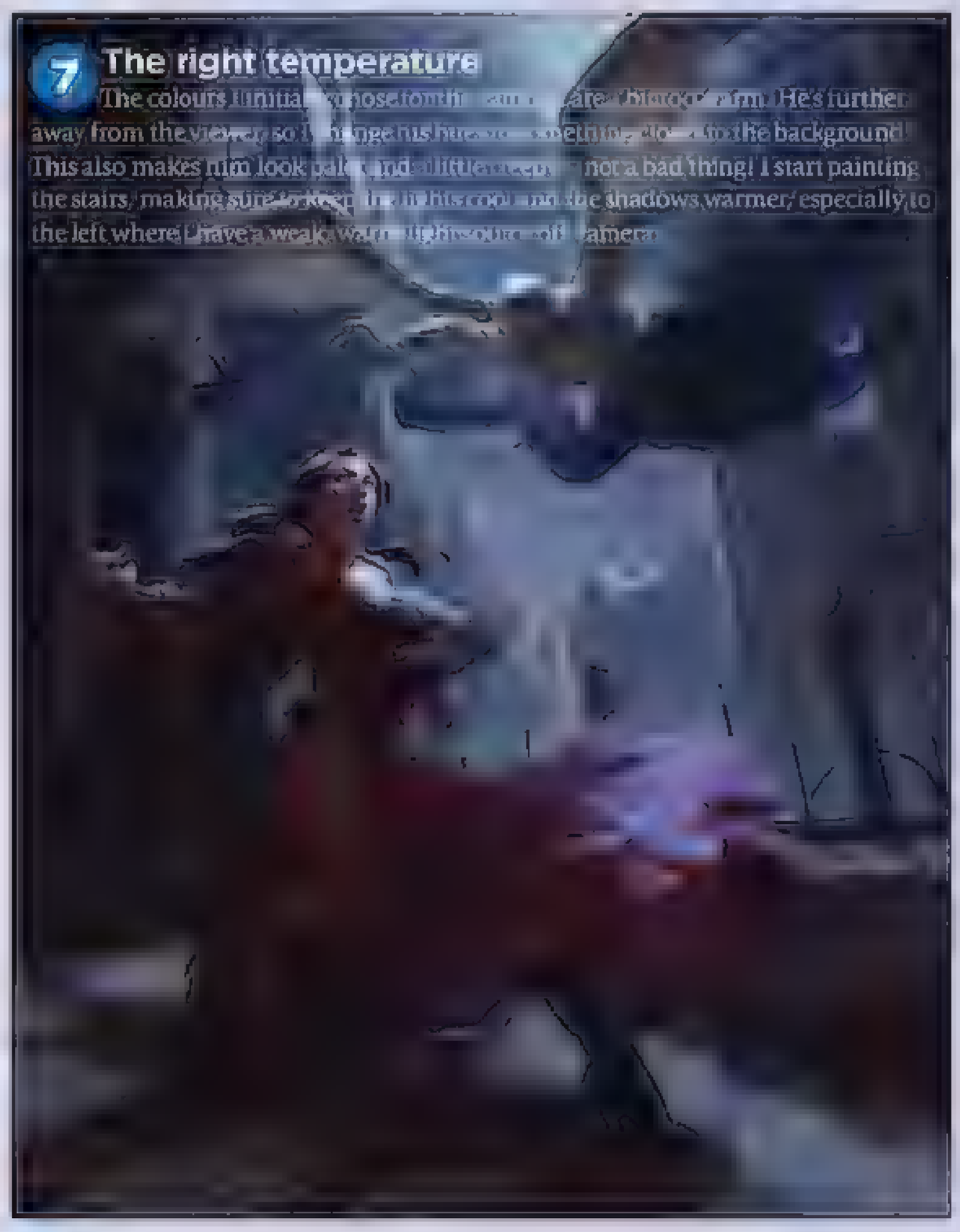
I look at reference pictures of churches and abbeys to come up with adornments for the towers in the background, and realise their basic shapes are looking rather bland. So I sketch in some new buildings that occupy roughly the same space as the previous ones, to preserve the initial composition. I continue painting the characters, lowering the Opacity of the line drawing as I define them with light and shadow



6 Creating focal points

As soon as I have a good idea of the light and colours, I start working on the vampire hunter's face. I like painting focal points such as faces early on in the process, because it's usually an effective way to quickly improve the image. This in turn keeps me motivated enough to keep working on it. I don't render the face to a complete finish though – just enough to get rid of the line drawing.



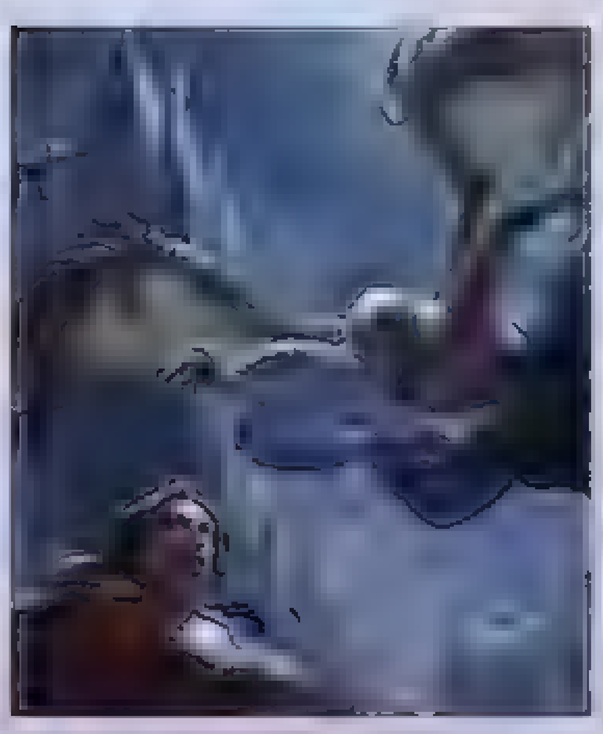


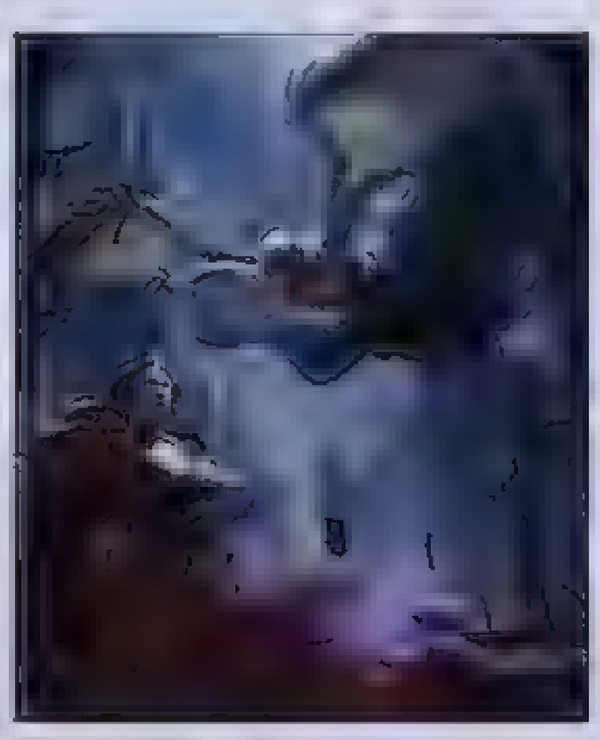
7 The right temperature

The colours I initially chose for the vampire hunter are black and grey. He's further away from the viewer, so I change his hue to something closer to the background. This also makes him look pale and a little sickly – not a bad thing! I start painting the stairs, making sure to keep in the blue tones and the shadows warmer, especially to the left where I have a weak warm light source coming from.

8 Changing some elements

The vampire's wings I originally sketched look like regular bat wings – too boring! I add some extra 'fingers' and other details to make them more menacing. Before working on the flowing strips of cloth I look at some references, then make up my own shapes to go with the composition. The vampire hunter's expression doesn't feel quite right to me yet, so I have her clench her teeth, creating a fiercer look.



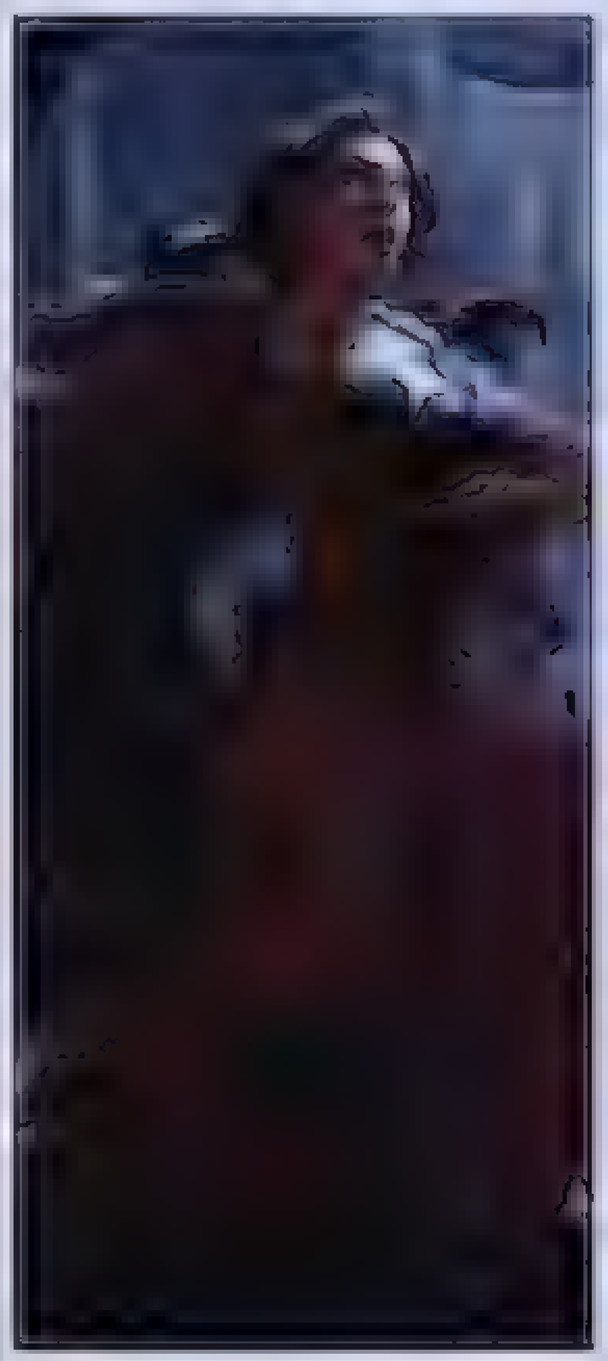


9 Detailing in the background

Using a slightly textured brush to indicate a rough surface, I work on the stairs some more. I also paint the buildings in the background, looking at my reference photos of architecture for inspiration and adding suggestions of detail while making sure that they remain mostly silhouetted. A textured brush consisting of random scribbles helps to create an illusion of smaller details. By adding a light mist at the bottom, the background remains separate from the window frame in the front.

10 Body tweaks

I continue working on the vampire hunter, concentrating on her hands and face, which I edit using Free Transform>Warp. Note how the part of her skirt that's dragging along the floor bunches up and gets crushed into interesting shapes. As I go along, I merge some of my layers and Clipping Masks. I'm working with smaller brushes now and want to start softening some edges, so this is more convenient.



WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: QUICK RENDER



As the name suggests, this brush is useful for rendering a variety of materials – especially cloth – quickly. It can be used to make both a soft gradation and sharp edges.

BRISTLY BRUSH



A hairy, versatile brush that creates a subtle texture. It works nicely for slightly rough surfaces, such as sand or stone, and can imply pores in the skin.

SOFT ROUND NOISE



This is the basic Soft Round brush with the Noise option added to make gradients feel more organic. It's very simple, but it makes a big difference.

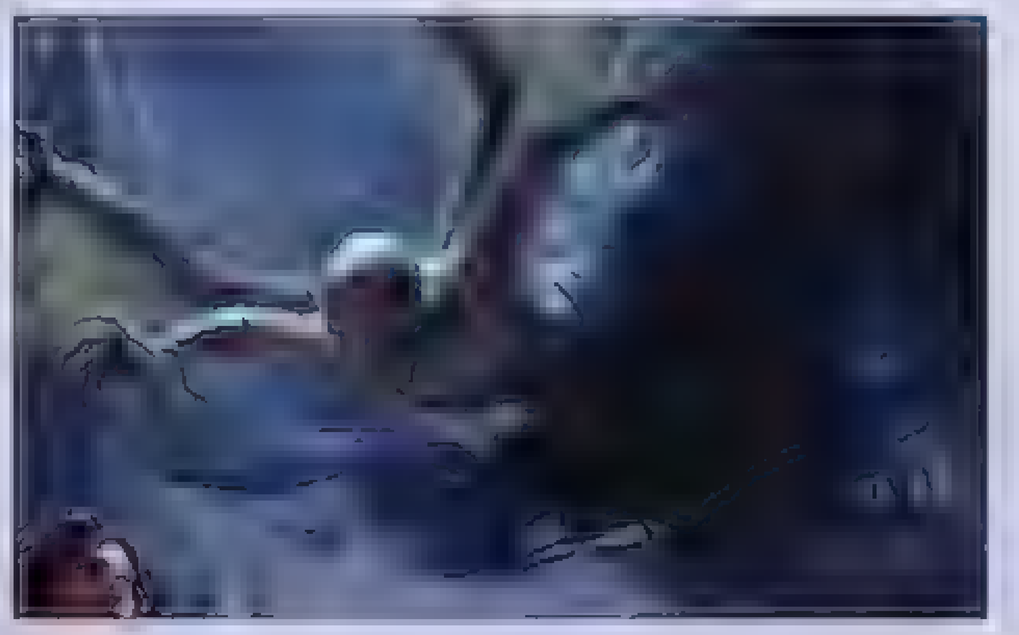
SMOKE



After using this as a base for wisps of smoke or flowing cloth, pick Soft Round Noise both as a Brush and an Eraser to work in the details.

11 Bats and smoke

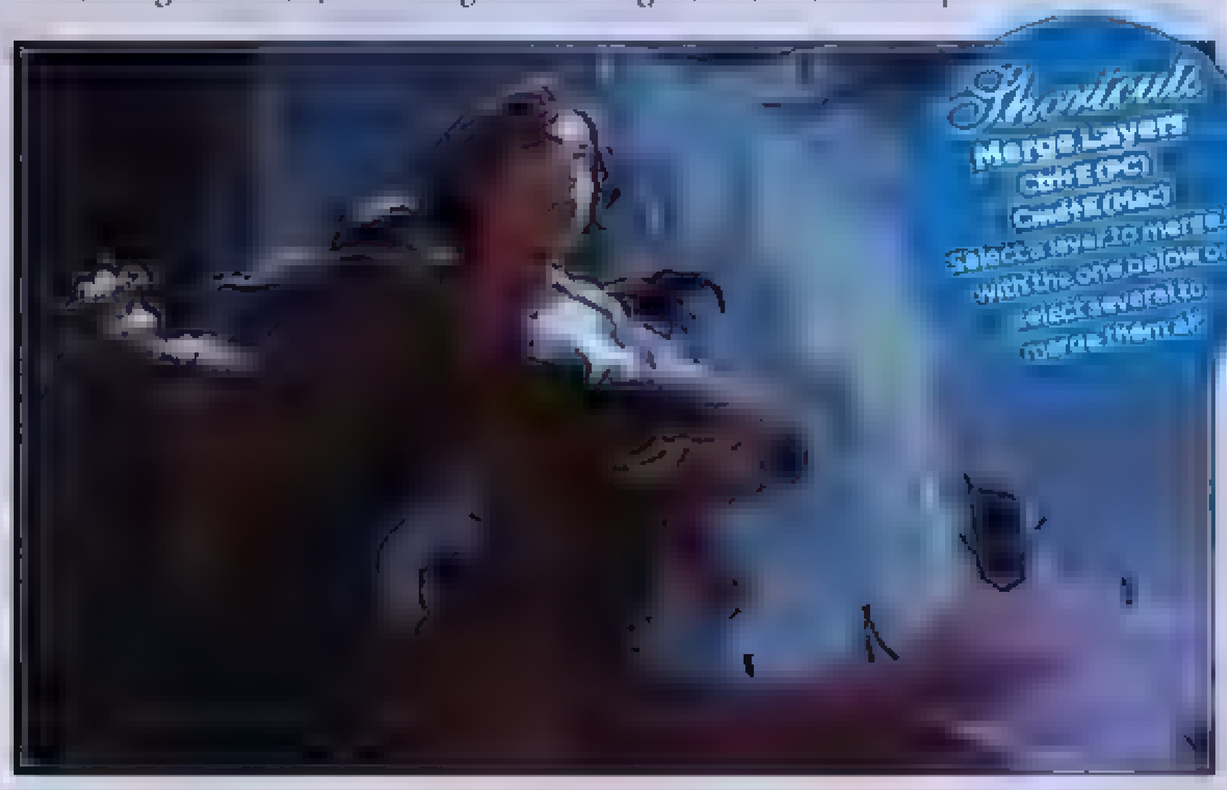
Somehow I've overlooked the bats I sketched when first planning the painting. So now I start painting them – they don't need a lot of detail, especially not the ones at the back. The strips of cloth that the vampire is wearing are very thin and light. This kind of fabric moves in a similar manner to flames or smoke when caught in a strong wind. Thinking about that, I decide to have the cloth fade into wisps of smoke, connecting it to the bats.





12 Changes yet again

I'm still not happy with the vampire hunter's face, so I change things up once more. Now I think I've got it right! This could have been done a lot faster with the right reference, but I prefer painting from my imagination as much as I can. It might take a little longer, but the things I learn by doing so are usually worth the frustration. Her legs are looking a bit small, so I enlarge them using Free Transform>Warp



13 Controlling colour and value

Everything is very purple at this point, so to separate the foreground from the background, I shift the hue of the sky and buildings more towards blue. This is achieved using one Normal and several Overlay layers. The building on the left needs to be darker and the moon a little brighter, to support the focal points. I make sure to keep some subtle variation in the hues. This adds interest and looks more natural





14 Enhancing the vampire

I render the vampire, making his face quite bright so it stands out from his body. I add more veins to his wings and some extra smoke to echo the diagonal lines of the light on the stairs for compositional reasons. To give the stairs some texture, I create a big stroke with a basic Chalk brush, lower the layer's opacity and use Free Transform>Distort to match the perspective. I usually prefer brushes to photo textures



15 Lighting the shadows

I further define the folds. Note how the shadowed areas still receive a faint bluish light – this is diffused light from the sky. Usually this doesn't occur at night, because the moon's light (which is only reflected light from the sun) normally isn't strong enough to show up once it's scattered by the atmosphere. However, my moon and sky are very bright and I'm going for a more cinematic lighting setup to keep everything visible



16 We need more bats!

It feels like there are too few bats, so I add more. I draw the basic shape for each bat on a new layer, lock the transparency and paint it with a basic Hard Round brush, sampling colours from the vampire and the background to tie them into the painting. Instead of using the Motion Blur Filter, I select the Smudge tool with a hard-edged brush up. This gives me better control over what I'm blurring



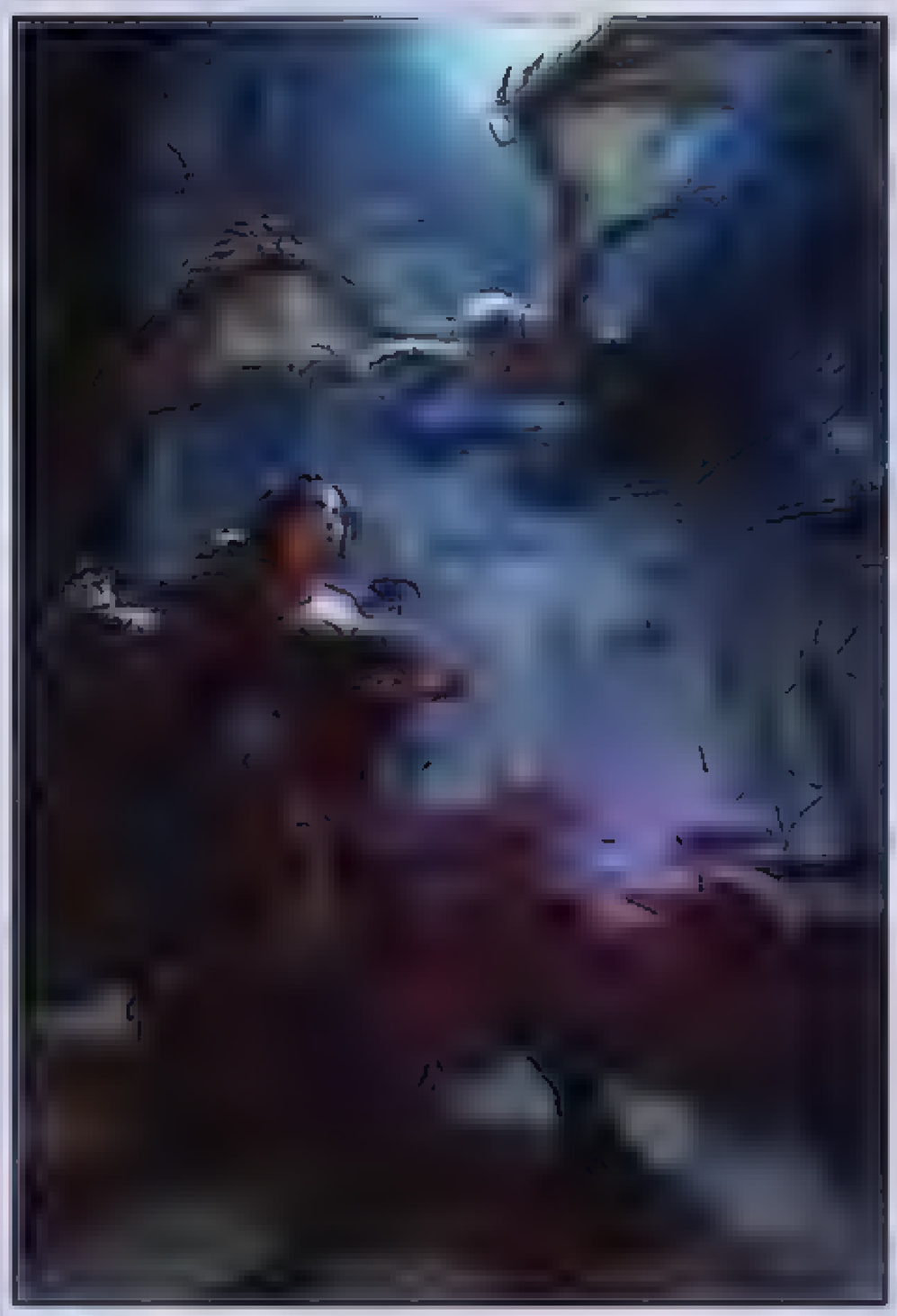
17 Painting the moon

On a new layer I draw a circle and lock the transparency. Using a photo of the moon as reference, I quickly paint a similar texture. Then I experiment with different layer modes to blend it into the background. I end up with three layers: Soft Light at full Opacity, Screen and Darker Color at a lower Opacity. Finally, I flatten them on to the background use Free Transform to make the moon slightly bigger.



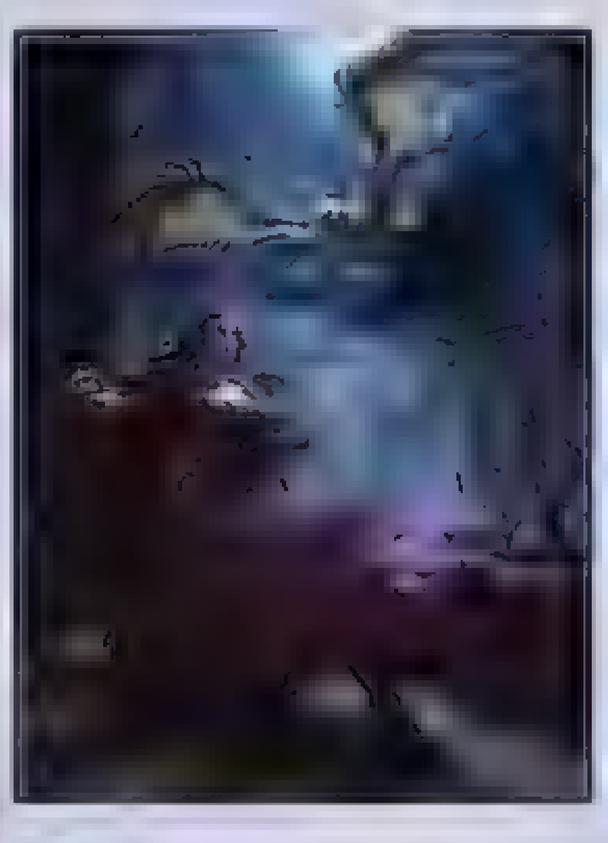
18 Even more changes

I'm getting more and more into the details, but sometimes I still find something bigger that needs to be edited. The way the cloak is attached to her clothing makes no sense, so I pull it forward and add a silver clasp. I also put the leg strap from the first sketch back in. It enhances the foreshortening of the leg and makes this area of the painting appear less empty.



19 Final adjustments

I'm not happy with the appearance of the smoky cloth, so I adjust the shapes so that it looks more readable and interesting. I also make a few minor changes to the hunter's pose to enhance the twisting motion of her upper body. Using Free Transform>Warp enables me to do this a lot faster than painting it all over again. One of the iron bars in the background is too distracting, so I erase it



PRO SECRETS

Fresh eyes

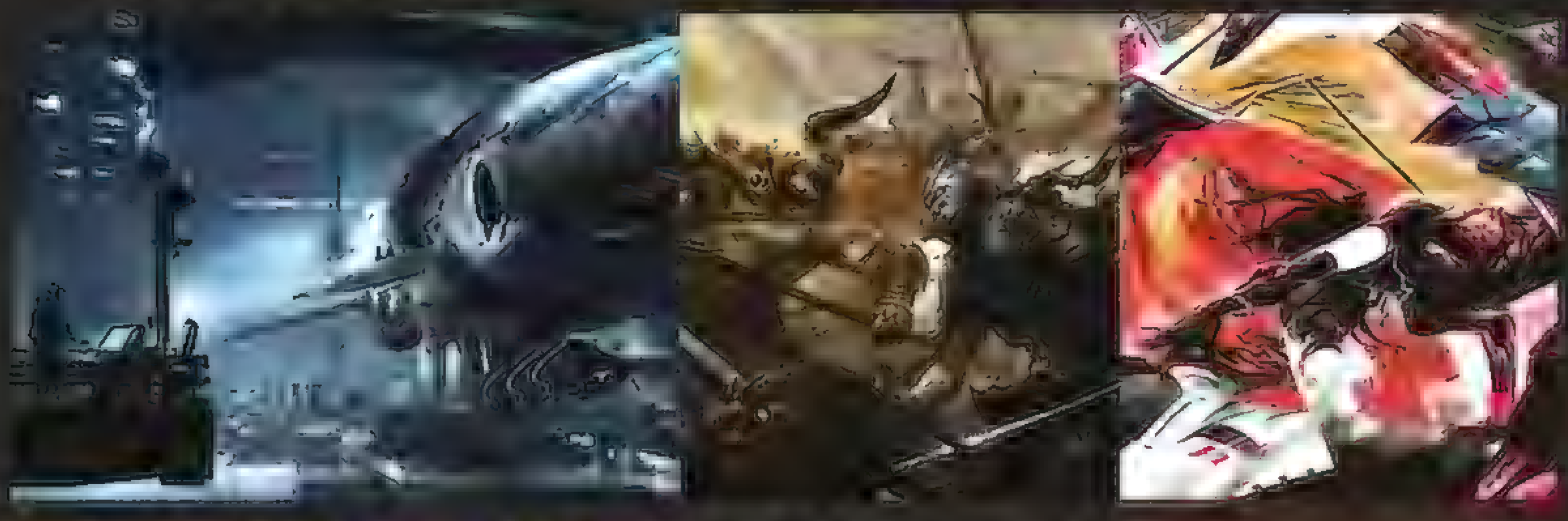
You think you're painting is done? Hooray! Save it and celebrate. Don't put it on the internet or send it to your client right away, though. Instead after a day or two, come back to it and take another critical look. You might notice problems that you couldn't see before, because you'd been staring at the image for too long. Providing your deadline isn't too tight to do this it may save you headaches later on.

20 Finishing touches

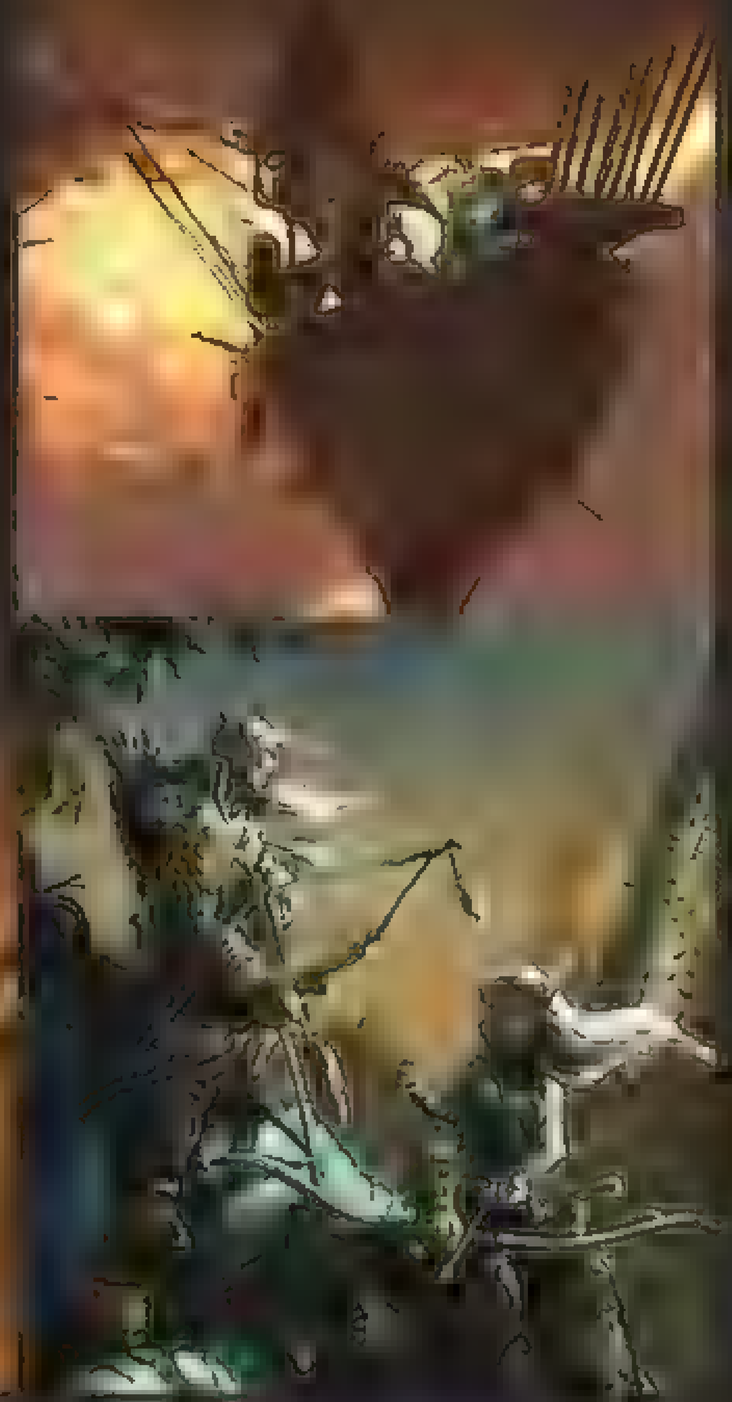
On a new layer I quickly draw indications of patterns around the seams of her garment and set Opacity to full. Then I lock the layer's transparency and paint over it with a big Soft brush, keeping my light sources in mind. After flattening the image, I use the Smudge tool to soften some edges. The whole image is a little dark, so I brighten it up with Brightness/Contrast and Curves. And it's done!

LEARN TO PAINT WITH THE BEST!

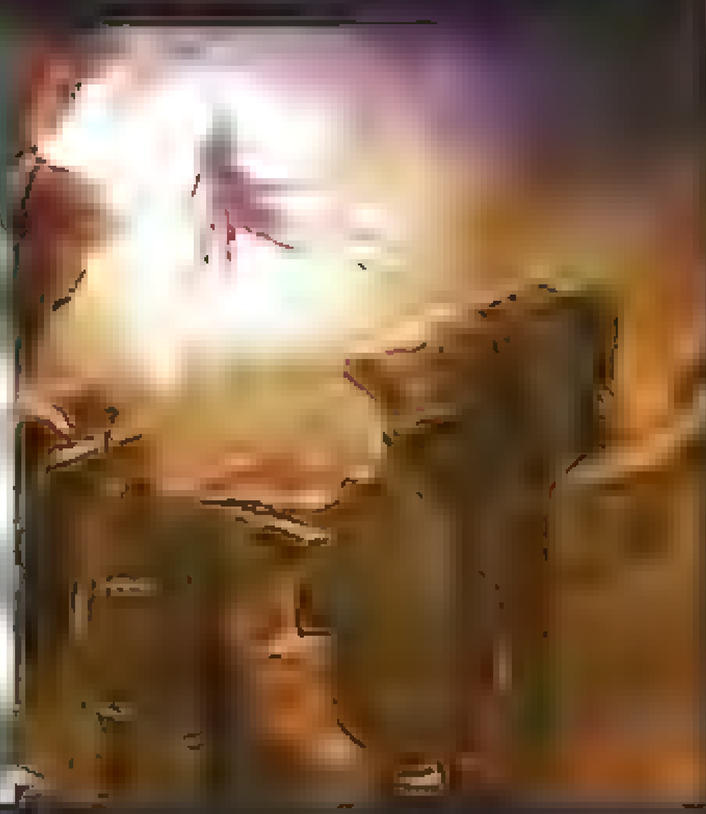
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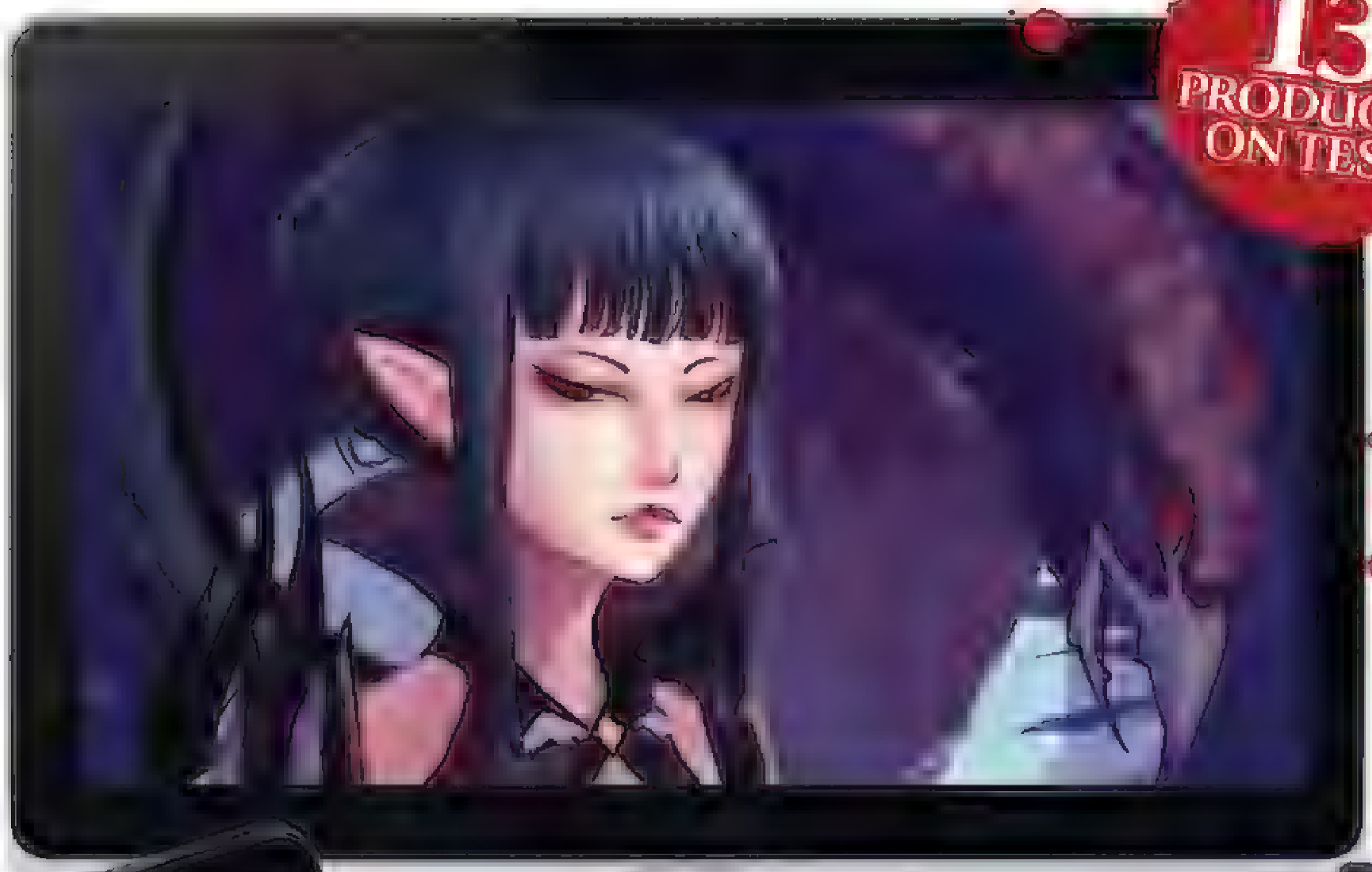
FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

ImagineFX Reviews



Artist's Choice Award
Software and hardware with a five-star rating receives the 'FX Artist's Choice award'

The latest digital art resources are put to the test by the ImagineFX team...



13 PRODUCTS ON TEST



HARDWARE

102 Iconia W700
Acer's latest tablet makes the most of Windows 8, but what can digital artists expect to get out of the device?

SOFTWARE

104 New software
MotionArtist; Exposure 4; Pencil 3D; Photoshop Touch for phone

BOOKS

106 New reads
The Art of The Croods; Just Draw It!; Faeryland: The Secret World of the Hidden Ones.

TRAINING

107 Environment Design for Games and Film Vol 1
Rather than going over new ground, this video takes you to pastures new.

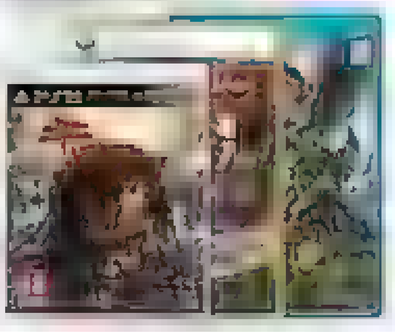
FILM

108 Rise of the Guardians
We talk to one of the artists who worked on this children's film

VIDEO GAMES

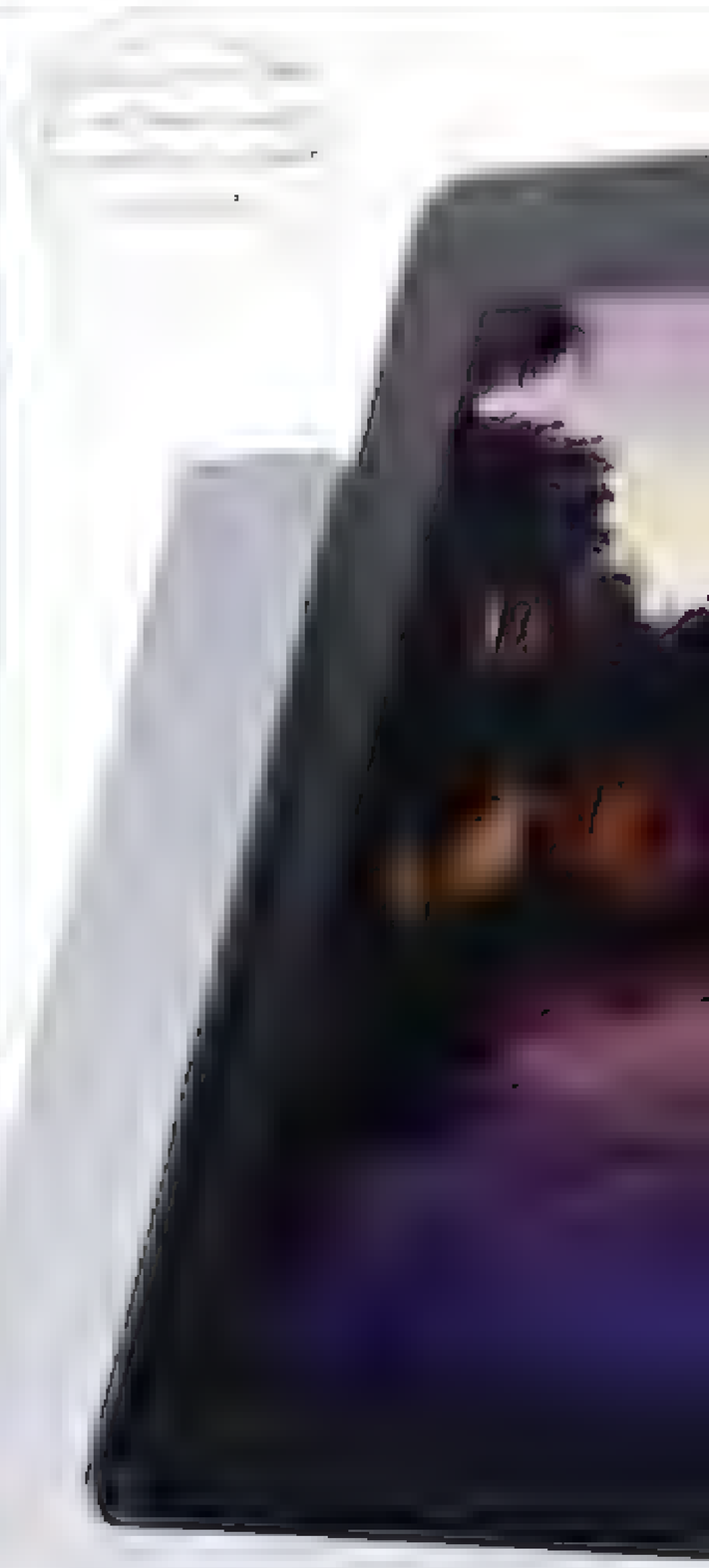
110 New games
Injustice: Gods Among Us; Monster Hunter 3 Ultimate; Dead Island: Riptide.





RATINGS EXPLAINED 5 Magnificent 4 Good 3 Ordinary 2 Poor 1 Atrocious





Iconia W700

ICONIC KIT Acer's latest tablet makes the most of Windows 8, but what's it like for digital artists?

Price | Company | Web | Contact

Windows 8 – Microsoft's attempt to capture the burgeoning tablet market – has been met with mixed reviews, especially in comparison to its biggest competitors: Google's Android and Apple's iOS. The biggest criticism is that Microsoft has fixed something that wasn't broken, reinvented the wheel to be squarer. Indeed, Windows 7 is still a pretty damn good operating system even to this day.

But Windows 8 has one trick up its sleeve that its competitors don't, and it's a particularly great one for digital artists. Because the operating system is designed to work on both tablets and more conventional desktops it's capable of running just about any Windows program including Photoshop, Illustrator and Core



When you dock the W700 it turns into something more akin to a desktop PC



Painter. We're talking full blown applications here, not cutback versions such as Photoshop Touch.

To put Windows 8 to the test we've got our hands on Acer's Iconia W700. It's essentially a laptop in tablet's clothing, and the occasional quiet whir of the fan reminds you of this. It feels remarkably solid, with no visible screws

> **It's essentially a laptop in tablet's clothing, and the occasional quiet whir of the fan reminds you of this**

or vents on its sleek aluminium body and the included dock and Bluetooth keyboard can be used to make it more akin to a desktop computer. At 11.6 inches it's larger than an iPad, and its 945g weight is 300g more than Apple's tablet.

While the screen is resplendent in its 1080p HD glory it is a tad faddy. This isn't so much Windows 8's problem

The dock also includes three USB connections and a power input



which itself is sleek and powerful – but more to do with the various programs' desktop origins. Photoshop is rendered tricky to use precisely because it's not a touch-specific program, and features a whole host of tiny features and menus which are best clicked with a good old mouse not prodded with a chubby digit. Worse still is the fact that Photoshop's active image area is only touch sensitive if you move your finger or stylus from the outside in.

Adobe is said to be working on getting Photoshop up to scratch and you can always plug a Wacom tablet into the USB port and it'll work nicely – but this does defeat the object.

Illustrator works better, fluidly responding to both flesh and stylus strokes. But it makes us wonder why it functions well when Photoshop doesn't. Corel has touted its Windows 8 touch-specific features but we did not see a little lag when we ran Painter.

As Windows 8 gains traction on tablets it's increasingly important for companies to get their products up and running properly in the operating system – something that hasn't happened quite yet. The W700 comes as a magnificent piece of tech but we wouldn't wholeheartedly recommend it for digital artists unless you're prepared to use it as a laptop rather than a tablet.

DETAILS

THE BEST OF THE REST

See how the Acer Iconia W700 fares against its competitors

Apple iPad

Web: www.apple.com
Price: From £399



The tablet that launched them all packs some serious hardware and decent digital art software, including ArtRage, Procreate and Inspire Pro. The screen is magnificent, and it's embellished with Apple's typical sheen and polish.

Samsung Galaxy Note 10.1

Web: www.samsung.com
Price: £380



Samsung's Android-powered tablet boasts a pressure-sensitive stylus, which gives it a Wacom-like degree of flexibility. It's a nice piece of kit (we gave it a four out of five good rating back in issue 90) and Samsung's own creative apps add a lot of value.

Microsoft Surface

Web: www.microsoft.com
Price: From £399



Launched alongside Windows 8, Microsoft's Surface includes pressure sensitivity, but it's also limited by its Windows 8 RT operating system, which doesn't have a huge amount of apps for artists.

Panasonic 4k

Web: www.panasonic.com
Price: £TBA



It's not due out until later this year, but Panasonic's Windows 8 4K tablet stunned colleagues at CES. At 20 inches it's massive, packing an ultra-HD screen that's specifically designed for artists and editors.

Sitemaps.com



Anyone who's dabbled in movie or audio editing will find MotionArtist's timeline-based interface familiar

MotionArtist

MOVING PICTURES This program aims to breathe life into your comics by adding motion and sounds, but is it too complex for its own good?

Price	Company	Web	Contact

Smith Micro's MotionArtist aims to give comic illustrators and writers the ability to animate their work. It sits somewhere between a movie editing program, such as Adobe's Premiere Pro, and Flash animation packages of yore. The upper panel contains your comic, and below there's a timeline for sequencing effects and animation. It's slightly bewildering to start with, but we can't think of a better way of creating such a program.

MotionArtist contains no actual art creation software, so you'll have to import pre-created artwork from Photoshop or Smith Micro's own Anime Studio. Cleverly, all your Photoshop layers are preserved, so you can animate foreground and background elements individually. On top of this, the program supports import from all common graphic files and a big advantage of its animated nature is that it can pull in video too.

Once all the elements are imported you can add effects such as tweening which smoothly moves an object on a set path, shakes to attract the viewer's attention and simply act on, and move the camera to pan across a scene or zoom in on a certain element. Sound can also be imported or recorded from your microphone, and there's a huge array of text bubbles and fonts if you lack voice-acting ability.

When you've finished your project you can export it as a movie file to upload to YouTube, or save it as an HTML5 file which can be browsed and interacted with using any popular browser – including ones on smartphones. While MotionArtist's interface takes a little getting used to, it achieves what it should. We can see many artists retroactively animating their comics with the software.



MotionArtist aims to make your dynamic comic art even more dynamic

DETAILS

Exposure: It's all the fun of the darkroom without those pesky caustic chemicals



Exposure 4

OLD SKOOL Add non-cheesy retro effects to your images

[redacted] $199 [redacted] Alien Skin Software
[redacted] www.alienskin.com
[redacted]

The success of retro photography service Instagram has proven everyone loves old-looking photos and even dull photos can be spiced up with a whacky frame and filter. Alien Skin's Exposure is Instagram's older, more mature brother, enabling you to add old-school effects to images within Photoshop or Lightroom.

You'll find a huge range of film types with names such as Agfa RSX II 100 or Kodak Panatomic-X. Alien Skin has spent a lot of time researching how certain stocks affected the final image, and the results feel just like old photos, rather than new ones with washed-out colours or increased contrast.

There are plenty of other effects, such as adding dust, scratches or overexposure. Each of these can be tweaked even further to alter colour, tone, focus and grain. It's the closest you'll get to trying out different film types and processing techniques without a dark room and lots of expensive stock.

We balked slightly at its $200 price tag, for a Photoshop plug-in. But while it's aimed at photographers we can imagine digital artists finding a lot to love.



Exposure 4 offers a raft of nifty effects, such as overexposure, dust and scratches. However $200 for something that's not a standalone program feels pretty steep to us.

Pencil 3D's hexagonal flower interface enables you to change brush size and colour



Pencil 3D

iPad + iPhone

PENCILLED IN A 3D drawing app that adds an extra dimension

Price: 69p/99¢ Company: Pheigo/Francisco Costa Web: www.phe go.com

Pencil 3D enables you to create sketches in a 3D environment by moving the canvas around with either a two finger swipe or by moving your iPad around you. (You can also activate the iPad's camera and draw a 360 panorama around you using the live view as a reference.)

ts hexagon interface a ms to rep icate mu ti-touch nterfaces such as Adobe Eazel and s act vated e ther by a three-f nger tap or v a the flower' n the top-left corner You can then alter your var ous settings such as colour and brush size by us ng the different panels (or peta s) as s ders. Unfortunately your brush opt ons are mited to s ze on y, and the brushes are only ava lab e as a square and so render ragged y There are a so no ayers ava lab e for bu ld ng up evels of colours

The intention of Penc 3D is adm rab e However, because t's so diff cu t to use and the constant motion so distracting, this is an app we won t be rush'ng back to Perhaps future upgrades with a r cher feature set w l remedy this, because the ook and feel of the UI s very smart ndeed



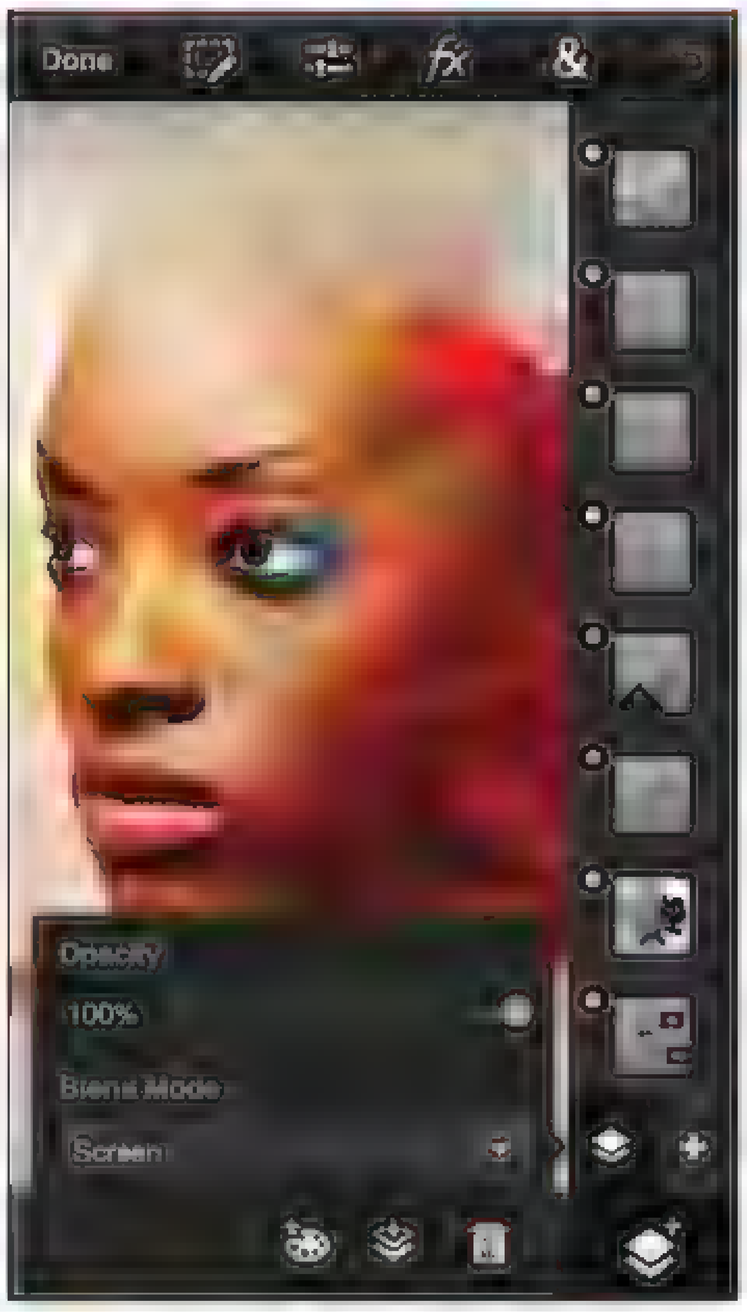
Rather than an undo button, Pencil 3D uses a 'Time Travel' function that undoes your work using a simple slider. Unfortunately, it only undoes brush strokes, not the eraser

Photoshop Touch for phones

Android & iPad

TOUCHY SUBJECT Adobe's tablet-based image-editing software finally makes its way to our favourite pocket gizmos

Price: Company: Web: Contact:





You won't be creating masterpieces with it, but for quick fixes on the go Photoshop Touch for phone works a treat

Photoshop Touch for phone uses nice chunky icons for all but the biggest of fingers

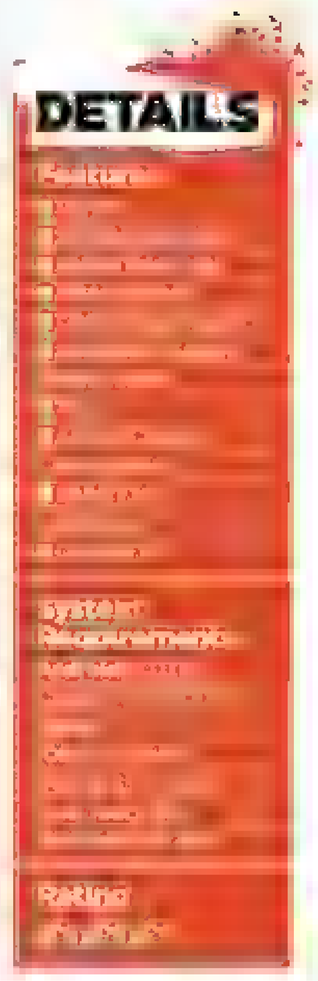
Smartphones have got a bit of a raw deal when it comes to photo-editing software: the best they've offered until now is Photoshop Express, which is a little too stripped-back to be useful. But on-the-go digital artists can rejoice as Adobe has brought the more fully featured Photoshop Touch to iOS and Android smartphones, and the app is pretty much identical to the version released for the iPad last year.

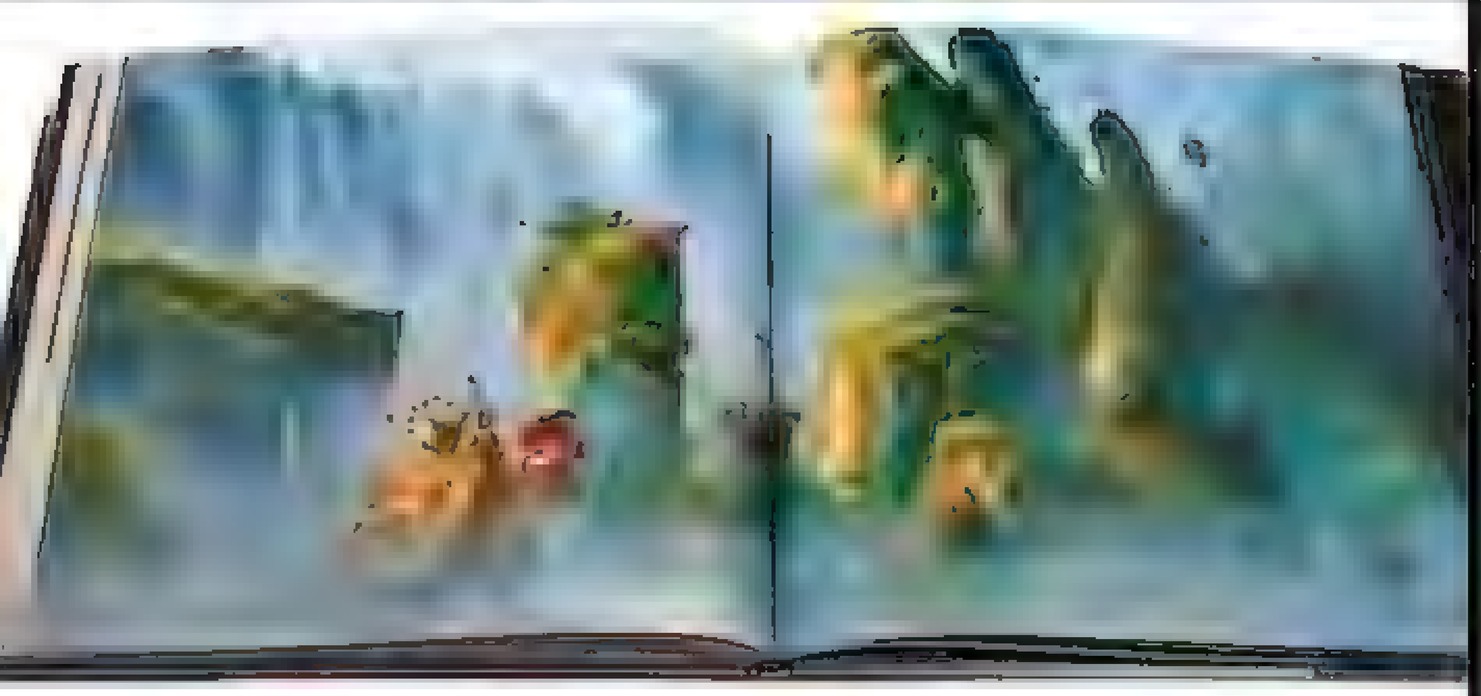
Obv ous y, a smartphone sn t as big as the comparat ve y spacious Pad Ed t ng c ose-up mages s f ne but mu t p e se ect ons on a large, deta led p ctures s a no-go. Adobe is promoting Photoshop Touch for phones as a way to make quick ad ustments when you re on the move, rat r than bu ld ng a Photoshop masterp ece

One of the coo est features is the Scribble Se ect on too , n which you draw squiggles over parts of the image you want to keep or discard It's surprisingly effective and nte gent g v ng you mouse or Wacom tab et evels of prec s on w th your finger which can be fine-tuned f needed You' also f nd a Clone too for eras ng unwanted areas, and standard Photoshop features such as Cropp ng Rotat on, Warp and Text

We tested Photoshop for phones on an ag ng Android-powered Samsung Ga axy S2, and found it d d occas ona y become aggy and jerky Th s s ke y to be ess of an issue on the more standard sed OS devices and powerfu Andro d smartphones

There s a so a d st nct ack of tutorials, so new users are thrown n at the deep nd w th no explanation as to what many of the too s do But t's st great to have a decent image ed tor - rather than someth ng that ust adds retro f lters n your pocket





The Art of The Croods

CRUDE DUDES DreamWorks' latest animated blockbuster shows us a land before time – and logic!

Author Publisher Price
Web Available

DreamWorks Animation's The Croods sounds like the kind of film students would dream up after a few too many silly cigars. Set in the Croodaceous period, it features a family of cavemen who embark on a perilous journey through a world populated with evolution's cast-offs. High-concept films don't get much conceptually higher than this.

As our access point to this weird and wonderful territory, the Crood family has to be recognisably human with Neanderthal traits something the designers pull off admirably. Various iterations depict the Croods as gorilla-like apes and hairy humans, but their final appearance assisted by character designer Takao Noguchi, is somewhere between the two. It's pointed out that the patriarchal Grug Crood is an old version of humanity, one who's about to be usurped by the younger generations and as a result his design is a little baser, more knuckle-dragging.

While the human protagonists set the scene, it's the creatures that steal it. The book includes a double-page spread of Noguchi's concepts of mish-mash animals from disparate environments. It's hilarious in its absurdity, featuring animals such as the gangly koalama, the grumpy-looking, spiny echidna monkey and the completely pointless oyster rat.



Most of these creations were ditched from the film, but it's still a wonderfully cute insight into the homely creative process behind the film. The animals that made it through the cull are exquisite nonetheless. Belt is a doe-eyed sloth whose long arms wrap around a character's waist and there are detailed images of a pig-faced bat and a landwhale, which travels on elephant knee legs.

The environments in which these creatures reside is similarly discombobulated with giant shells and corals from the sea floor providing shelter for the Croods. A sequence set in a giant cornfield looks similarly surreal, and it's clear the film's art team put as much into the bizarre landscapes as it did their oddball residents.

The lavish and in-depth book concludes with a breakdown of a key sequence in the film, which is a fantastic way to see how everything comes together. Of course, there's no sense of motion in the book, but we're in love with the idea of the film and the array of art that accompanies it. We're sure anyone with an interest in creature design will find it fascinating, too.

RATING ✍✍✍✍✍

Further reading...

An inspiring book to get us all drawing and another that believes in faeries

Just Draw It!

Authors Sam Piyasena and Beverly Philp
Publisher Search Press **Price** £10
Available Now
RATING ✍✍✍✍✍

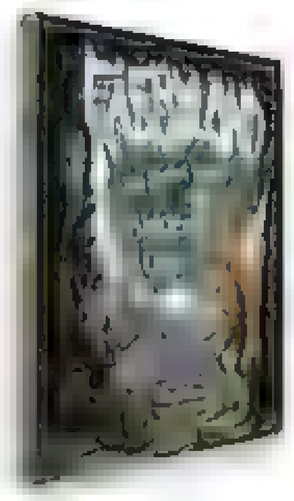


As its title suggests, Just Draw It!'s ideology is that anyone can draw, and therefore it skips off putting theory and gets you sketching right away. The very first lesson invites you to create abstract shapes and images in relation to the music you're listening to, and through the course of the book it gently introduces more formal techniques.

Just Draw It! also grounds itself in art history with "Look up" boxouts, which recommend artwork and artists related to each tutorial. It suggests seeking inspiration everywhere, such as drawing quick finger sketches on steamy windows or looking at manhole covers to get an idea of perspective. It's as useful for experienced artists as it is for beginners, too. Flick open a random page and you'll find creative activities to ease your procrastination.

Faeryland: The Secret World of the Hidden Ones

Author John Matthews
Publisher Abrams **Price** £17
Available Now
RATING ✍✍✍✍

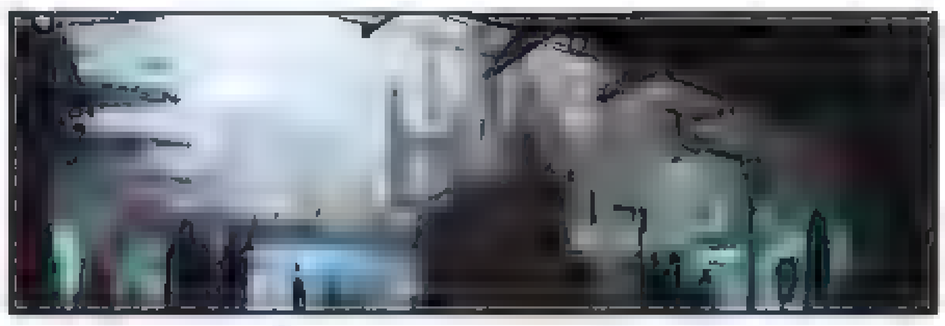


Faeries have been conspicuous in their absence from fantasy art in recent times, perhaps because of their innocuous nature and the fact dragons and muscular heroes look far cooler. Faeryland seeks to redress that balance, offering a complete guide to all things tiny, mythical and humanoid.

There appears to be little doubt in author John Matthews's mind that faeries exist and this drives the slightly twee approach of the book. Matt Dangler's artwork is impressive, but can also feel dark compared to traditional faerie paintings. The beauty of fantasy art is that it absorbs such disparate visions without complaint and fans of the genre are sure to find this entry enjoyable.

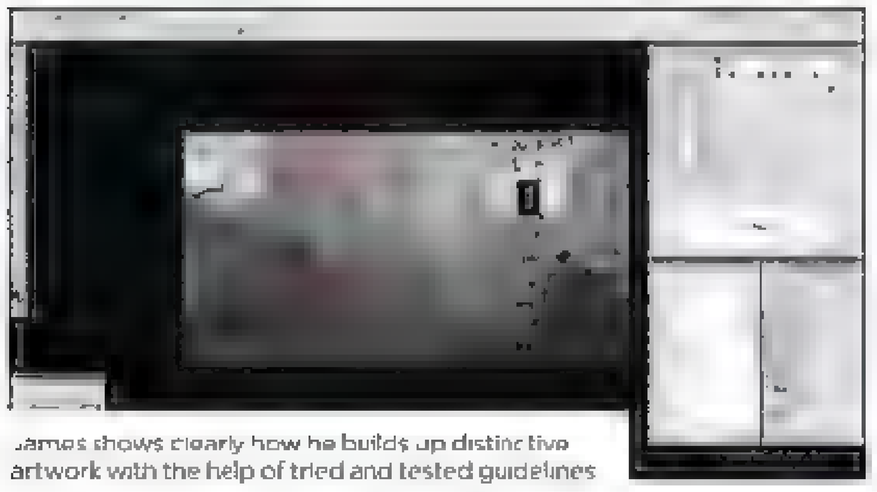


In Environment Design Vol 1, James Paick creates a series of concept art pieces to demonstrate key ideas





Even adding rough silhouettes of people creates a sense of scale



James shows clearly how he builds up distinctive artwork with the help of tried and tested guidelines





Environment Design for Games and Film Vol 1

A WORLD OF YOUR OWN Concept art giant James Paick makes creating vibrant landscapes and vistas look easy in this live masterclass

Publisher Concept Design Workshop **Price** **Format** **Web**

Artists in Australia and the Pacific region know Concept Design Workshop well: the group runs live multi-day training events featuring the cream of concept art pros. CDW records some of the sessions to deliver the artist's insights to a broader audience.

In this video, environment magneer James Paick takes his audience through the main steps that he uses to work up a brief into a decent study. The audience doesn't have much of a presence in the recording other than a few questions, which are not heard but displayed on-screen, but they provide a target for James's relaxed confident delivery of his process. There's certainly a livelier feel than you'd get from a simple narrated screen-capture video.

The early stage of concept art James discusses here isn't about polish and finish; rather it's about communicating ideas and information, while still using your skill to involve your viewer in your picture. You'll see how he turns an open creative brief into a world that feels alive.

What's impressive about James's approach is how simple he keeps things. A lot of the core principles that he uses, such as the Rule of Thirds for composition, are tried, tested and familiar to many artists. So if you're looking for a workflow that transforms the artistic paradigm, you won't find it here. Instead you'll spend nearly three hours with an artist who applies a laser focus on what matters.

Time and again throughout the video James applies broadly the same methodology to devise a series of environments that are impressive in their diversity and their sense of place. You'll experience a thorough explanation and examples of some key principles – including focal points, values and colour – but more importantly you'll discover a toolkit to free your imagination.



JAMES PAICK

James runs Scribble Pad Studios in Los Angeles, specialising in concept art and design consultation for film and game production. His client list includes Naughty Dog, NCsoft, Trion, Sony Computer Entertainment America, Liquid Entertainment, EA, Sucker Punch Studios and Turbine Studios. His past projects include Prey 2, Rift, TRON: Evolution, inFamous, Uncharted 2: Among Thieves and Rise of the Argonauts. James also holds regular live workshops, enabling him to pass on his experience



www.scribblepadstudios.com



The film wants you to regain belief in childhood myths and fairy tales with the Man in the Moon playing god.

Rise of the Guardians

SUN SET Constant action hides some cracks in this pretty yet shallow yarn, but it requires a leap of faith to follow it all the way to the credits

Distributor	Certificat	Price	Availabl

With a nod to The Avengers, Rise of the Guardians is a children's film filled with big characters and bright colours. True to DreamWorks form, its intriguing concept is tantalising close to delivering on sophisticated whimsy, but falls short with an obvious script that finally lurches into a crescendo of gibberish.

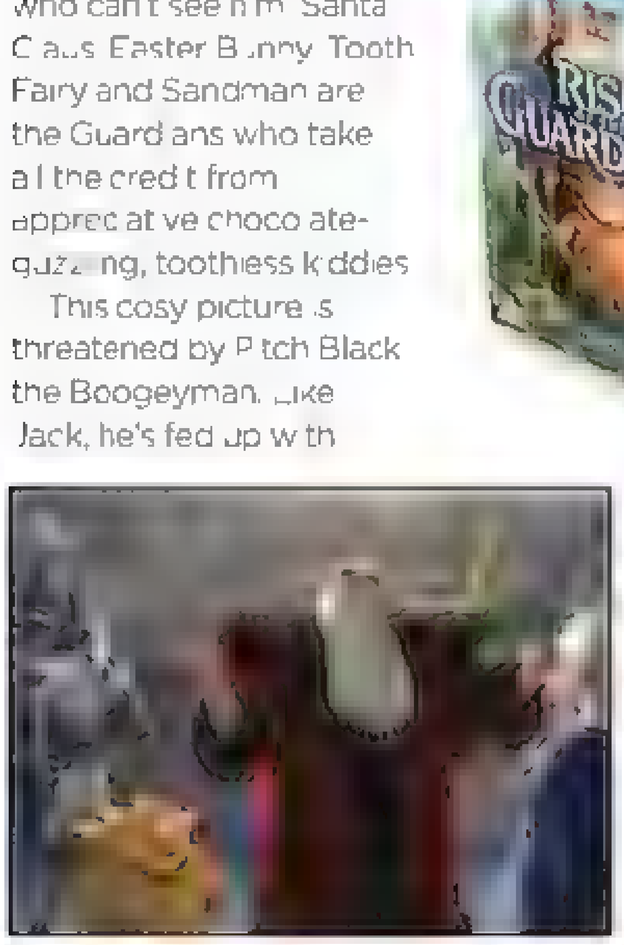
The premise is interesting, though Jack Frost is a loner who orchestrates fun, wintry snowball fights for kids who can't see him. Santa Claus, Easter Bunny, Tooth Fairy and Sandman are the Guardians who take all the credit from appreciative chocolate-guzzling, toothless kiddies.

This cosy picture is threatened by Pitch Black the Boogeyman. Like Jack, he's fed up with children not believing in him, and by kidnapping Sandman and subverting his powers he plans to poison the dreams of youngsters around the world, forcing them to doubt the existence of the Guardians.

There are some stunning visuals. The Easter Bunny's warren is a kaleidoscopic explosion. The Tooth Fairy and her swarm are rainbow-washed, family-friendly versions of executive producer Guillermo Del Toro's Hellboy 2 teeth-fixated Meanies. There's no other influence from the Mexican filmmaker here, but the accompanying 'art of' book released earlier this year revealed fantastic work behind each character.



It quickly becomes clear that this film is about belief, and with the Man in the Moon serving as a silent higher power that all look up to in supplication, some could argue this is all just profaith through the backdoor. But the final battle, awash with a torrent of platitudes between the kids and Guardians is so awkwardly banal you'll remember why you stopped believing in Santa.



Santa Claus, Tooth Fairy, Sandman, Easter Bunny and Jack Frost all get makeovers in the film.



The Easter Bunny, or Bunnymund as he's known in the film, was the last character to be finalised. Artist Tim Lamb found the voice of Hugh Jackman helpful in pinning down the bunny's look.

RATING

TIM LAMB

The artist casts his mind back to designing the Easter Bunny

When did you work on the film?
I came in December 2010 and was asked to come up with a design for Bunnymund. There had been several iterations earlier, but the production had recently cast Hugh Jackman to voice the character, which played a big role in influencing Bunny's new design.

What challenges did you have?
Bunnymund was an especially difficult design to crack. He was the only non-human-based character, yet he needed to feel homogenous with the other Guardians. He was also the last of the Guardian characters to be designed. The way he was going to function in motion had to be taken into full consideration. Bunnymund needed to be both animal and human, who stood upright and conversed with human characters, but also could revert to all fours.

How much freedom did you have working on Bunnymund?
There were a fair few requirements for the character. The style of the movie had established itself as slightly more serious in tone compared to other DreamWorks films, so he needed to be gentle though heroic. Hugh brought a rugged Australian ranger element to the character's persona, which the design also needed to reflect. His fur would be inspired by Easter egg patterning, and take on the shape of armour. His anatomy was influenced by a kangaroo or rabbit.

What other DreamWorks titles have you worked on since?
I've worked on several titles still in early production. These past two years I've been fully immersed on a project that readapts the classic 1960s television series, Peabody & Sherman. I've had the unique honour of art directing, working on the character designs and developing the aesthetic style for the environments.



Tim has risen through the DreamWorks Animation ranks to art director. He lives in San Francisco, California.

www.timmylamb.blogspot.com

/BALLISTIC/

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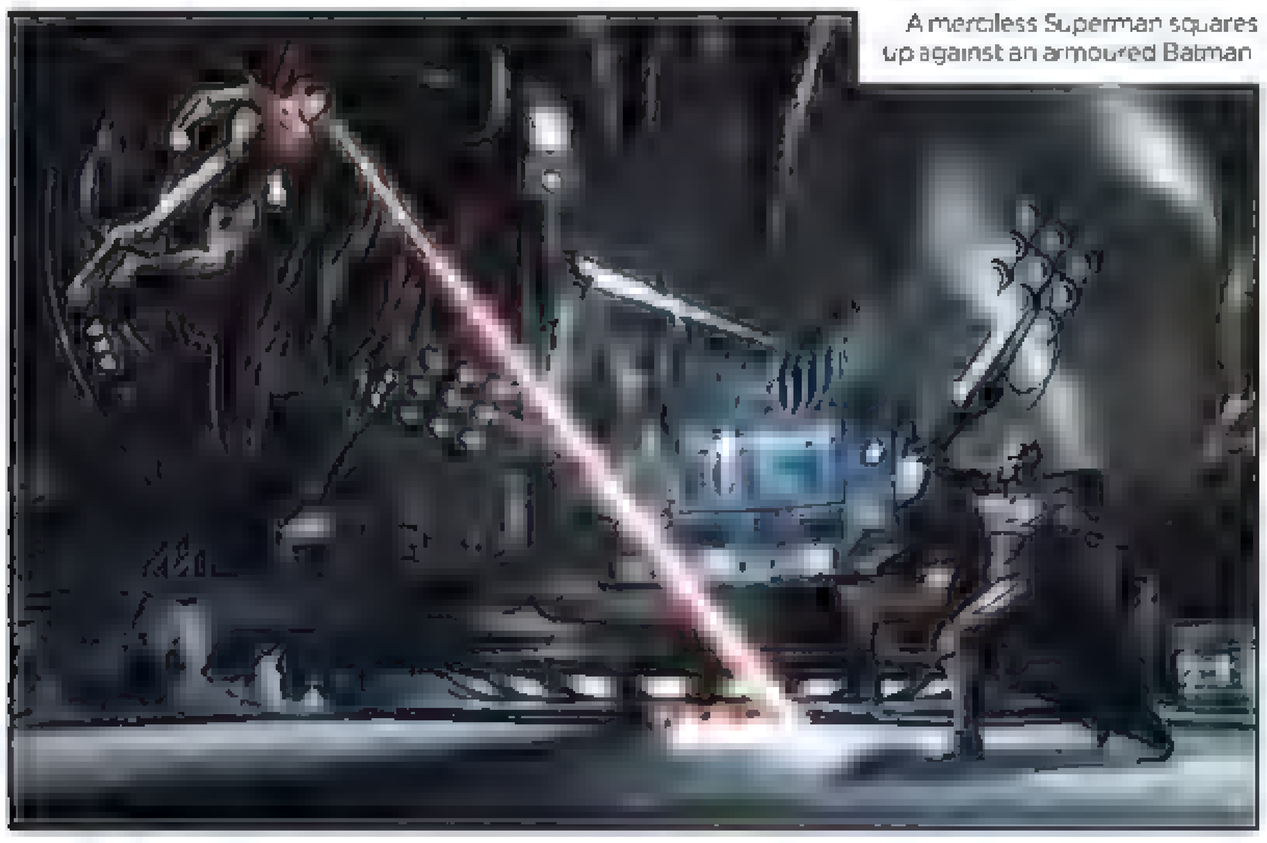
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A merciless Superman squares up against an armoured Batman

Injustice: Gods Among Us

HEROIC CLASH Batman vs Superman vs the entire DC universe, in NetherRealm's multiverse mash-up

Format [illegible] Publisher Warne[illegible] Price £40 Available
Web www.injustice

Injustice is nothing short of a total artistic reimagining of DC Comics' most sacred characters, which is at best striking and at worst inexplicable. Does Superman really need body armour?

Well, maybe. There's some business to explain why Superman might not be all that, in Injustice's version of the DC Universe. Metropolis is levelled in a nuclear attack which sets the stage for an emo Superman to instate a new world order, with himself as merciless executioner of the guilty. Batman opposes his friend, and the heroes and villains of the DC Universe are thrown into conflict.



Art director Steve Beran's team has imagined a world where Superman has kick-started an arms race, and almost every DC hero and villain has had to adapt to keep up. Batman received a mechanised version of his usual costume; the Flash and Wonder Woman get steel plates covering vital areas; Lex Luthor is dressed as a tank; and Harley Quinn fights in her pants. In fact, given the militarised look of most of the male characters, it's a little suspicious just how Catwoman, Quinn, Raven and Hawkgirl are afflicted by the Male Gaze, but this is comic book fiction where women rarely dress for practicality, even when fighting a god.

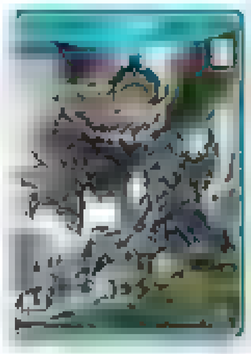
It's to Steve's credit just how faithful his team's designs are to their source material, even in cases where things start to look a little silly: the Joker in his suit and tie versus intergalactic killing machine Doomsday? But you need to leave logic at the door. This is, as Steve puts it, the Mortal Kombatification of these DC icons, all muted colours and bloody strikes where a character with a broken jaw and shattered spine will keep fighting.

Kombat creators NetherRealm might never make a tournament-level fighting game to compete with the likes of Street Fighter, but there's an incredible sense of playfulness and fun about its work. Injustice is a game any button-masher could enjoy just for the sheer visual spectacle, but there's just enough depth to the game to allow for mastery. Fighting games are rarely so accessible, and with those iconic characters given such striking redesigns, so visually appealing.

RATING ✍✍✍✍

Also look at...

Track down hulking beasts for fun, but give the zombie-infested island a miss



Monster Hunter 3 Ultimate

Format 3DS, Wii U
Publisher Capcom
Price £30/£40
Available Out now
RATING ✍✍✍✍

We're dealing with two very different but very similar games here. Monster Hunter 3 on 3DS takes a visual hit but is otherwise a most accomplished replica of the Wii U version. You can even transfer your save between the two and take your hunting on the road and on both formats it's a handsome game.

Monster Hunter's big in Japan, where cafés exist just to bring hunters together on their handhelds. There's little plot, little structure and a brutal learning curve, but it's still Japan's biggest game. As you hunt with friends you'll acquire new kit and gear up for even tougher encounters. Like many Japanese games, the art team is an army, pumping out thousands of kit pieces with which to adorn your character and hundreds of monsters to hunt. It's a sheer triumph in terms of both quantity and quality, but don't expect an easy path to seeing the art team's accomplishments.





Dead Island: Riptide

Format PC, PS3, Xbox 360
Publisher Deep Silver
Price £40
Available Out now
RATING ✍✍



Dead Island will never shake off the promise of that 2011 CG trailer, which focused on the final moments of a family in a zombie-infested resort. It was so visually and emotionally striking, it only served to highlight the disparity between the fantastic trailer and the abysmal game.

Riptide's more expansion than sequel and does little to address the first game's problems. It's still a clumsy first-person batter-'em-up on a tropical island, a together too thick with RPG mechanics and overbearing HUD elements. The art direction established in the original by Pawel Sasinger and Szymon Urban is still interesting if not as novel as it was before, and letting the zombie apocalypse play out in paradise makes for an original take on the end of the world. If the game were as unique as the game's art style, developer Tech and might really be onto something.

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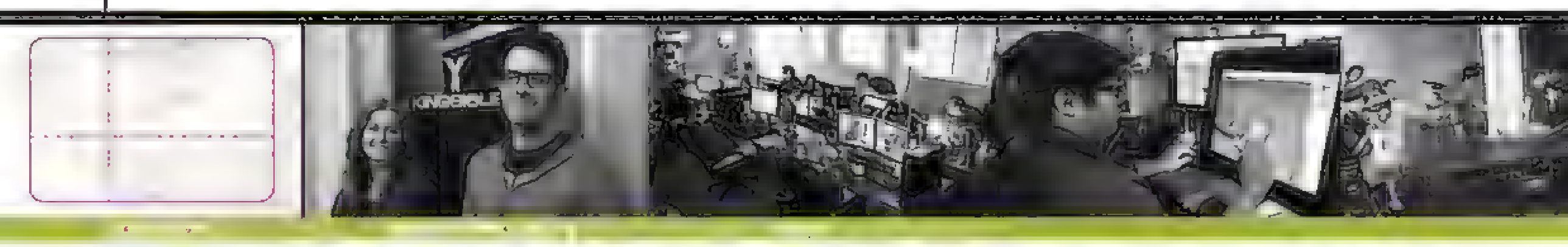
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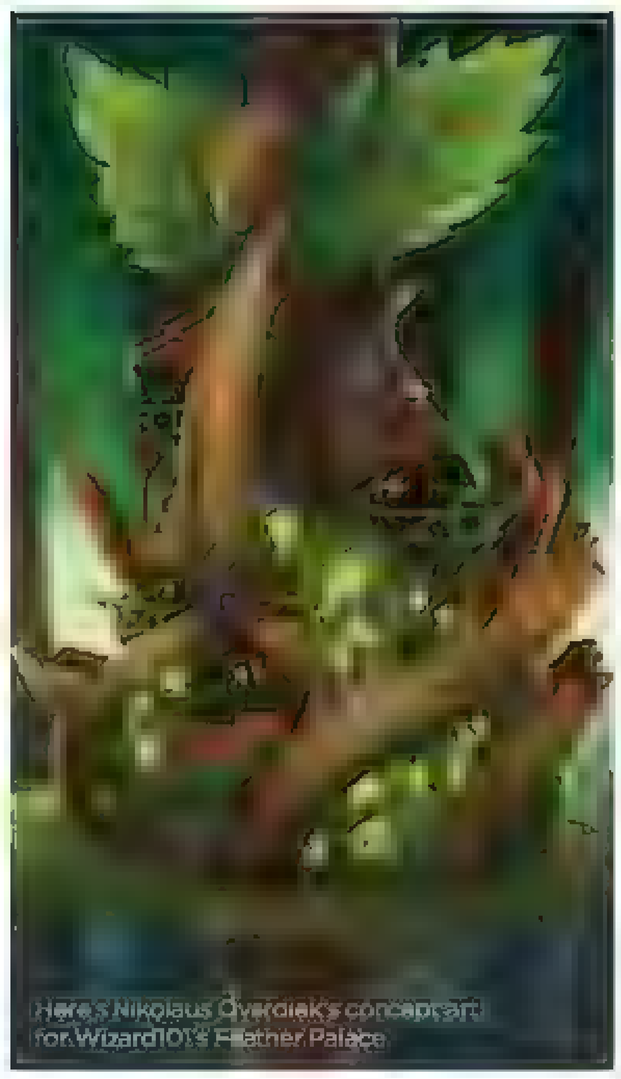
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KingsIsle Entertainment

FANTASY FAMILY The family-friendly MMO studio talks us through the many benefits of working with pirates and wizards

The foundation of most game studios is a familiar story: a couple of people who worked for a big games company peel off and do their own thing. Texas-based KingsIsle's origins are a little different. Back in 2005, founder Ellie Akilian had already co-established and sold a successful internet company, but had absolutely no knowledge of the games industry.

As far as gaming was concerned my experience was limited to watching my teenage son play online games



says Ellie. "However, it was through that interaction that I really saw the future and potential of online entertainment and gaming." KingsIsle launched its first game, Wizard101, in 2008, and followed it with Pirate101 in 2012.

Both titles are massively multiplayer online role-playing games, which use turn-based combat systems similar to card games. At the time it was an emergent market, but they've since swept up awards from the National Parenting Publication and Massively.com. The games' success can be attributed to Ellie's canny business acumen, the hiring of experienced games developers and, of course, its art department.

"Artistically we are the sole decision makers on our product, direction and ultimately the final delivery to our customers," Ellie says. "It enables us to do things the Kingsisle way." This independent approach ensures that there's a cosy feel to Kingsisle's art department. "There's a level of ownership over your work here that I never felt anywhere else, and I've found that to be really important for any artist to have," says the concept group's art lead Dave Greco.

Phu Giang's concept for Wizard101's Tyrannosaurus rex is fearsome but chunky, in order to appeal to a wide audience





MELISSA PRESTON

KingsIsle's art leader chips in on working for the studio

What does an artist need in their portfolio to get noticed?
I'd say it is a need for there to be evidence of creativity. Skill is a given and is coachable. However, creativity is the hardest thing to teach. I want to see work that has a sense of humour, that can tell a story, and that has personality and thought put into why the details are the way they are. I'm also a sucker for great use of lighting and colour. I come from a painting background, so anyone who can paint great textures and has a painter's approach to lighting and colour always gets my attention.

What's been your favourite project so far?
I'm most happy of my work as art lead on Pirate101. I consider myself lucky to be a part of such a talented group of artists and I feel extremely proud to have had such a big part in assembling and developing that team.

Why would you recommend working at KingsIsle?
It's all about the people. We have an extremely talented group of developers who care about their craft, but are also just really great people to work with. KingsIsle is a very positive environment to be in and I think that everyone is really dedicated and protective of that culture.

What's been the toughest challenge you've faced?
The biggest challenge for me on Pirate101 – indeed, for any team project – is learning to compromise. As an artist and lead, my first concern is making the game look as great as it can be. Obviously, this is a team that's busy making a game, so there are technical, design and time considerations that always have to be factored in. Learning to let go and recognising what is best for the project and not just for the art is always difficult.

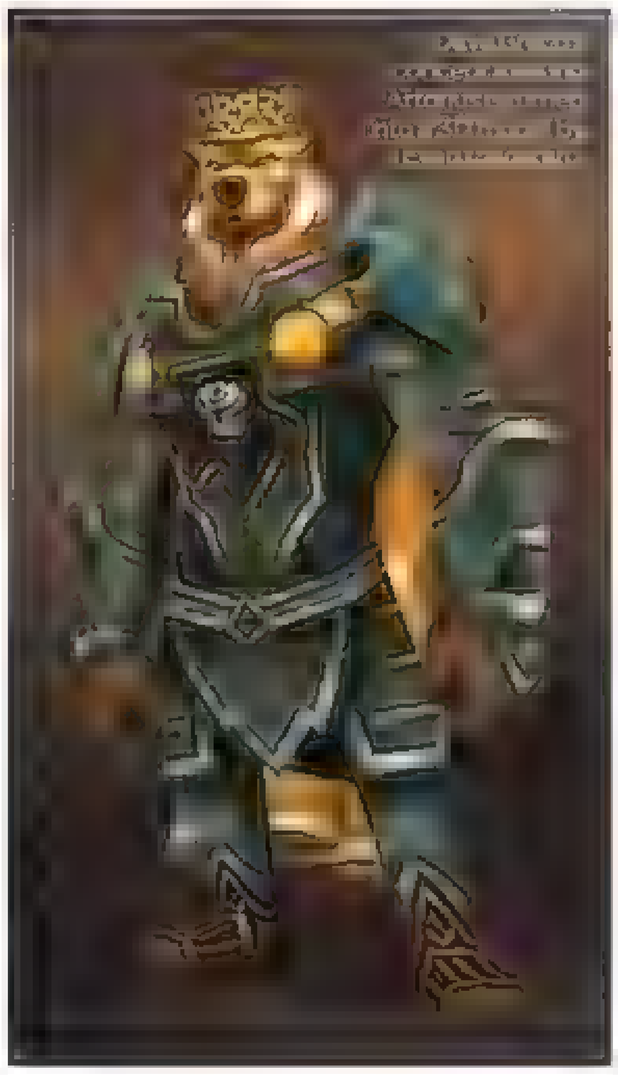


Melissa began her career at a mobile games company before joining KingsIsle as a 3D environment artist

www.kingsisle.com



This charming canine is known as Handsome Dan



As a concept artist, your work is translated very well from painting to in-game asset, which is fantastic

Dave began his career working at big games companies such as EA and THQ. He joined KingsIsle to work on Pirate101 before moving on to the formation of the studio's central concept team. Initially he was part of a team of two but the department has since expanded to eight. "It's always interesting to see what happens when a new team is growing and finding its feet. Luckily for us, it worked out great," he says.



Dave Greco's flying turtles form part of one of Pirate101's quests

Projects are sketched out by KingsIsle's designers and producers and then it's up to Dave's team to fill in the blanks. "They give us enough room to really explore the subject matter, and have as much fun with it as we need to," he says. "If we have a great idea and a great way to present it, then I'll always stand behind it."

The concepts Dave and his team come up with are then passed onto other departments. "Characters and certain objects then go to animators and just about everything ends up with the FX artists, who apply the final touches and make them game-ready," says Eric. "As a concept artist, your work is translated very well from painting to in-game asset, which is fantastic," Dave says.

The future for KingsIsle lies in mobile gaming, a space the company has dabbled in with Pirate101 tie-ins Grub Guardian and WizardBox. "We're seeing a tectonic shift to mobile and tablet devices, triggered by the release of the iPad and subsequent introduction of tablets from numerous vendors," says Eric, who's extremely keen on new handheld platforms. "Your game must stand out, and we have to prove that we can succeed in this arena. But I like our chances."



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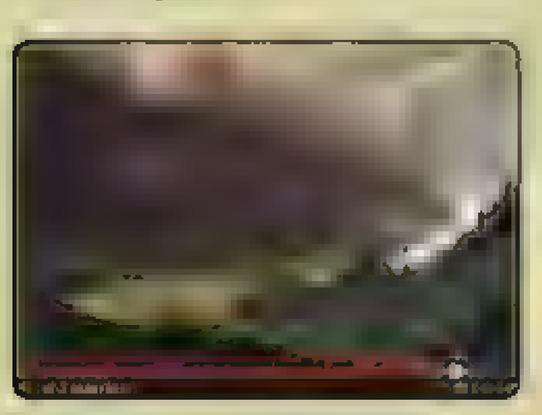
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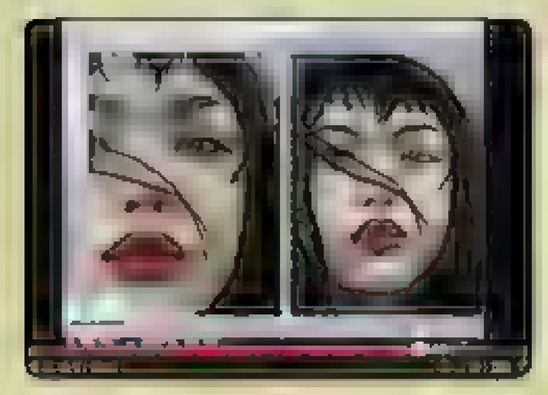
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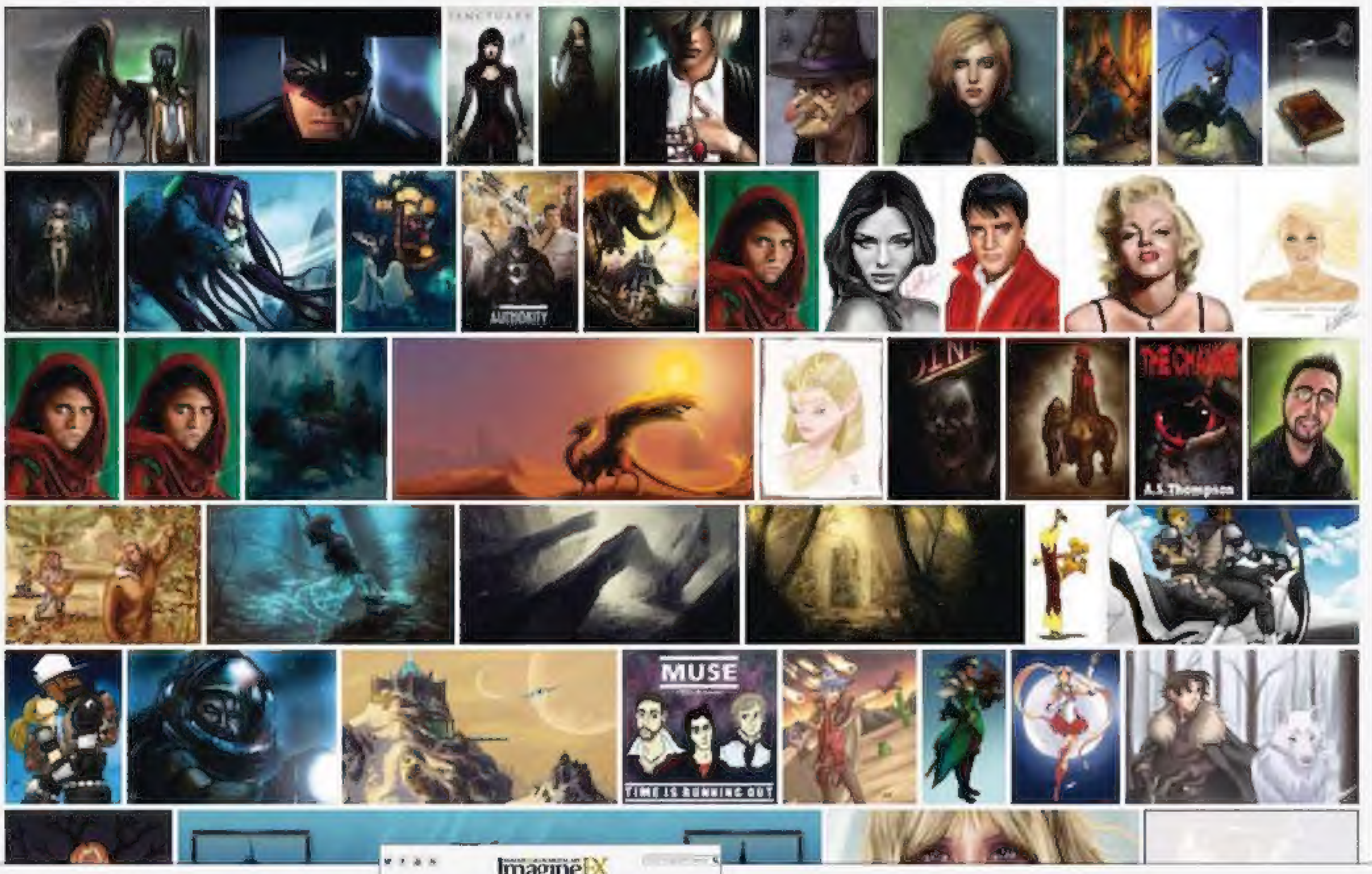
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EDITORIAL
IAN DEAN EDITOR
ian.dean@futurenet.com
DANIEL VINCENT ART EDITOR
daniel.vincent@futurenet.com
CLIFF HOPE OPERATIONS EDITOR
clifford.hope@futurenet.com
BEREN NEALE FEATURES EDITOR
beren.neale@futurenet.com
SHONA CUTT DESIGNER
shona.cutt@futurenet.com
NICOLA HENDERSON STAFF WRITER
nicola.henderson@futurenet.com

CONTACT US
POST ImagineFX Magazine, Future Publishing Ltd, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW, UK
PHONE +44 (0) 1225 442244
EMAIL mail@imaginefx.com
WEB beta.imaginefx.com
TWITTER @imaginefx
FACEBOOK www.facebook.com/imaginefx
DISC PROBLEMS +44 (0) 1225 822743
EMAIL support@futurenet.com
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UK PHONE 0844 848 2852
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PHONE (toll-free): 1-800 428 3003
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CONTRIBUTIONS
Tania Bora, Clint Cearley, Kinman Chan, Vaughn Emerson, Tony Foti, Michael Gapper, Damian Hall, Marion Delacroix, Kelley Harris, Richard Hill, Olly Lawson, Andrew McGregor, Eric Merced, Mark Molnar, Liam Peters, Darren Phillips, John Stanko, Anna Steinbauer, Alex Thomas, Paul Tysall, Francis Vallejo, Henry Winchester, Donglu Yu
PHOTOGRAPHY Future Photography Studio
PAUL NEWMAN group senior editor
STEVE GOTOBED group senior art editor
ROBIN ABBOTT creative director
JIM DOUGLAS editorial director

ADVERTISING +44 (0) 207 0424124
NICK WEATHERALL advertising sales director
nick.weatherall@futurenet.com
RICARDO SIDOLI account sales manager
ricardo.sidoli@futurenet.com
MALCOLM STOODLEY London sales director
malcolm.stoodley@futurenet.com
ROSS ARTHURS senior sales executive
ross.arthurs@futurenet.com
LAURA WATSON senior sales executive
laura.watson@futurenet.com

MARKETING
LYNDSEY MAYHEW marketing manager
ALAYNE LATHAM marketing executive

CIRCULATION
JANINE GRAHAM trade marketing executive
RICHARD JEFFERIES international account manager

PRINT & PRODUCTION
STEPHANIE SMITH production co-ordinator
MARK CONSTANCE production manager
NOLA COKELY ad production manager
NATHAN BRACKETT ad production co-ordinator
MICHELLE ROGERS operational purchasing manager

LICENSING
REGINA ERAK senior licensing & syndication manager

FUTURE PUBLISHING LIMITED
STUART ANDERTON group publishing director
MATTHEW PIERCE group publisher
FIONA TULLY publisher
MARK WOOD chief executive

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Tel +44 (0)207 042 4000 (London)
Tel +44 (0)1225 442 244 (Bath)

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